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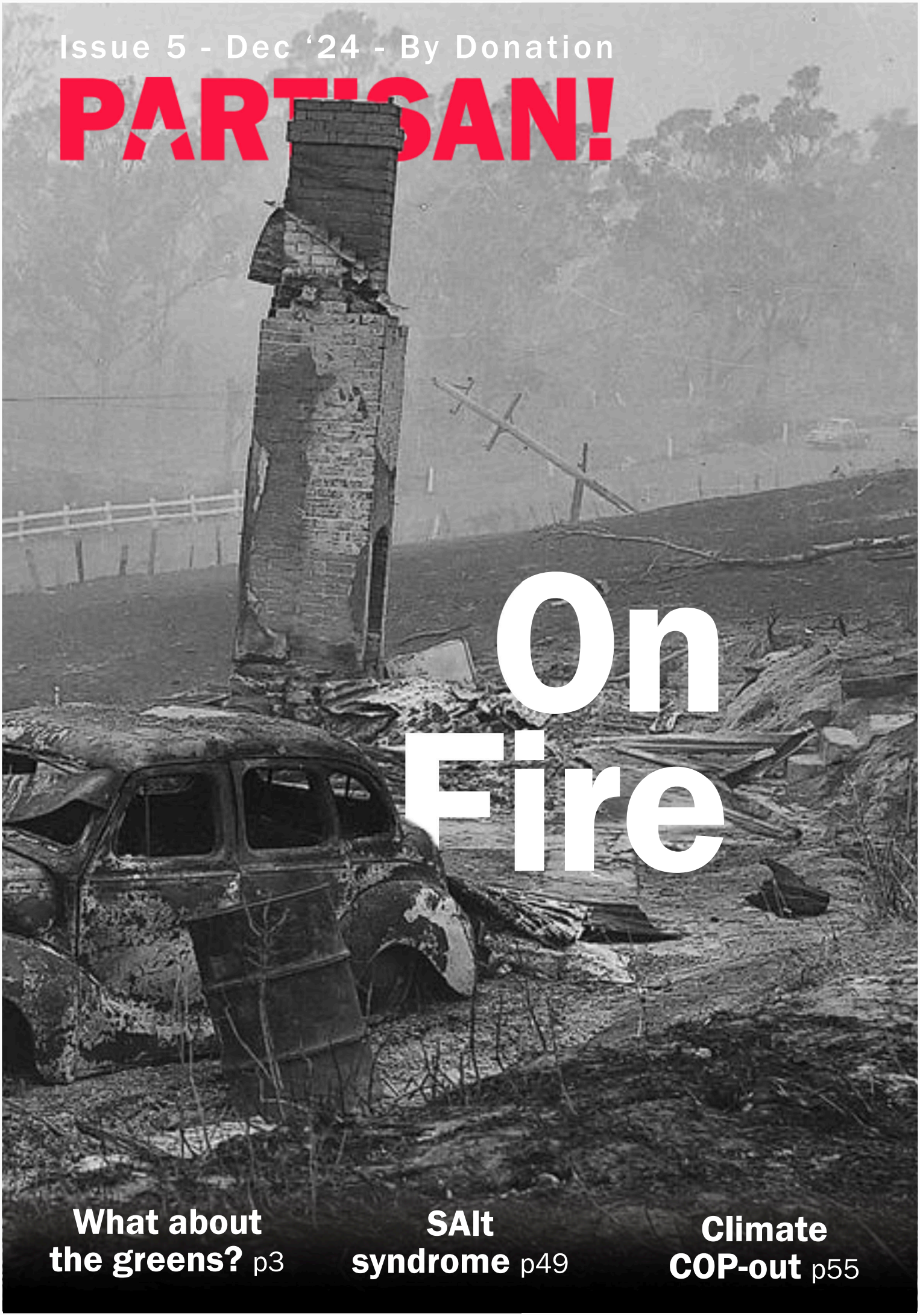

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About

Partisan is the official publication of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO). We are a monthly journal of the 'partyist left' in Australia – that section of the left which views the formation of a mass Workers Party as its primary task. Alongside the RCO, we fight for a reunification of the left into a party that can carry out the tasks of the communist and workers movement: the establishment of a democratic republic and the dissolution of the capitalist prison-states.

We hope you find Partisan to be interesting, and come to support the journal.

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The soil and the worker

Partisan Editors

In 1875, the Social Democratic Party of Germany began their founding program by stating that “Labor is the source of all wealth”. Marx made an important correction to this claim:

“Labor is not the source of all wealth. Nature is just as much the source of use values (and it is surely of such that material wealth consists!) as labor”.

The communist cause is, thus, necessarily the cause of liberating the planet from capitalist exploitation as much as it is that of liberating the working class from capitalist exploitation. In Partisan 5: On Fire, the relationship between environmental degradation and the capitalist system is expounded. Brought into the cold light of day are the internal contradictions of liberal attempts at preventing climate collapse, and the impossibilities of addressing human impacts on the environment within a capitalist framework.

For as long as nature is necessary for the production of capital, there is no possible way to avoid exploitation and environmental degradation; and nature is necessary for the production of capital as long as capital itself exists. There is no commodity created that does not begin as part of our natural environment, and until the total destruction of the commodity form there will continue to be a total destruction of the planet in its place. Natural disasters will continue to grow larger in both scale and frequency, affecting most of all those in the global south. We will continue to hurtle towards climate tipping points beyond which a return to the previous state of equilibrium is no more possible than turning back time itself.

The fight against environmental collapse must become a rallying cry for workers across the planet, for their struggle is one and the same . They, combined, are the “original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker”.

What about the greens?

Michael Ruhl

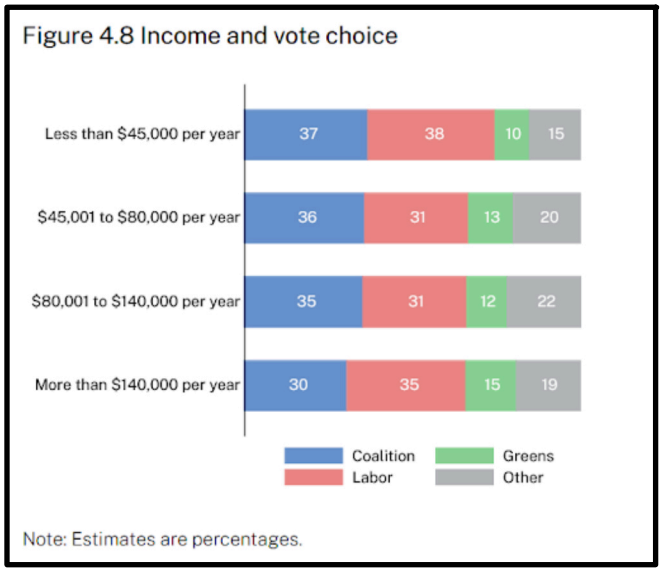
Supporting the Greens is almost the default for those on the Left in Australia. On its face, this is understandable. Since the 1991 dissolution of the Communist Party of Australia, there have been no other large parties claiming to be left-wing to barrack behind. However, this commonsense has proven itself again and again to be a dead-end. For the last thirty-two years of their existence, The Greens have functioned as nothing more than a graveyard of social movements, most notably the environmental movement. In doing so, they have diverted the precious time and energy of left-wing activist youth into a pointless electoral project.

Wait, so who are the Greens, really?

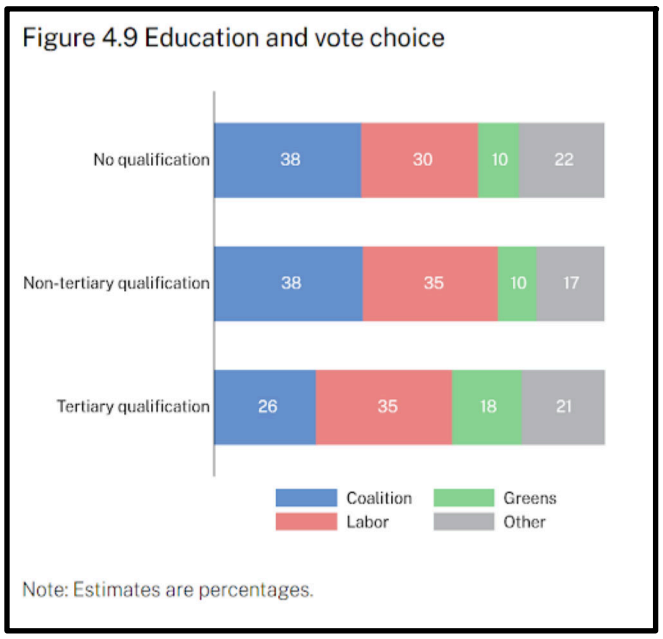
The class position

The Greens voter base is comprised, for the most part, of downwardly mobile middle-class professionals. Some in the party say that their support base has a substantial working class element. However, the voter-income data that exists shows the opposite, with Greens voters being more likely to have a higher income[1], and more likely to have a tertiary level of education[2]; clear signifiers of a middle-class party. These same supporters are the university-educated young to middle-aged people who "lost out" following the decline of the post-war Consensus.

These young professionals were sold the promise that if they went to uni and worked hard, they would live a "successful" life. Of course, that idea of success is confined to working a white-collar job and owning a house in the inner-city, bought on their own income. Ultimately, they simply want these things to be possible again. However, we can never turn back the wheel of history, and nor would we want to. The Post-War Consensus was financed by the exploitation of the Global South; Australia's ventures in Vietnam for example were by no means disconnected from our economic prosperity that enabled such "success" for much of the middle-class. The



[1] Income and vote choice at 2022 Federal Election (AES)



[2] Education and vote choice at 2022 Federal Election (AES)

Greens, as a party that pursues redistribution within the borders of one country, cannot by any means be considered socialist; they are a thoroughly bourgeois party devoted to the capitalist order, even if they may wish to change it.

The patrilineal, ideological lineage

The class position occupied by the Greens as the socially liberal, party of the professional petit bourgeois is not novel in Australian political history. Before their early electoral successes, their position as the party of the urban petit-bourgeois was occupied by the Australian Democrats, a moderate splinter from the Liberal Party. The early Greens

would gain a significant portion of its early membership from the Democrats, with many jumping ship as they took the latter's place. The Democrats themselves were descended from earlier Liberal Party splits, such as the Liberal Reform Group, and the Australia Party, which formed in 1966 and 1969 respectively.

The first and most obvious distinction between the Greens and their progenitors, is their overall stable level of electoral success nationwide over a span of three decades. This is partly because those earlier parties did not exist in a time when the social pact was breaking down.

When young, middle-class professionals increasingly face housing precarity and fewer professional employment opportunities, a party for their own class has a far greater basis for success. This is what underlines the Greens "pro-renter" and "pro-mortgage-holder" policies; not that of a cost-of-living relief for the working class, but as a reflection of the desire of the middle-class urbanites who too, now struggle with these pressures.

The matrilineal, movement lineage

This degree of "success" of the Greens would not have been possible without their continued incorporation of left-movements. This has been the case from the get-go, with the name of the party itself being an enduring legacy of this appropriation. The Greens emerged from the environmental movement of the 1980s, with which they would for a time become synonymous with. The first initial grouplet that would form what would become the Greens was the United Tasmania Group and was founded in 1972 by environmental activists (including future Greens founder Bob Brown) campaigning against the construction of the Lake Pedder Dam.

The single, unified party now known as the "Australian Greens" was founded by a federation of state-based Green parties in 1992, with politics wildly differing within and between the various sections. The sections themselves were a motley of conservative Tree Tories, environmentalists, anarchists, and former members of the Communist Party.

The incorporation of the environmentalist movement from whence it emerged is what drove the Greens' initial success and growth. It would then ride this wave into usurping the Democrats as the party of the petit-bourgeois liberal-left, who had failed to capture the environmental movement in the same manner.

Furthermore, the incorporation of hardened cadres left without a political home after the fall of the Communist Party of Australia helped the party's growth. This incorporation of socialists has had the effect of severely limiting the ability of an independent working-class politics to reemerge. Following the dissolution of the CPA, former members attempted to regroup the socialist movement under the banner of the New Left Party (NLP). The NLP was a flop, partly because much of the needed resources and cadres left for the Greens.

The contradictions inside this class-movement alliance

Although socialists on the party's left-wing support making the Greens a mass working class party, the party on the whole is aversive to getting involved in union work. In its place are reactionary efforts to 'defend the community' and support small business-owners. This lays bare that the basis of the Greens support is ultimately based in the urban small business owners of the major cities. Any worker who joins such a coalition ultimately subordinates themselves to their bourgeois program.

Because of this, the Greens have effectively acted as a graveyard for left-wing movements. The party does not advance the Left, but rather, binds it to a reformist program that refuses to challenge the capitalist order. Most recently, we have seen this with the Palestine solidarity movement. Over the last few years, solidarity with the Palestinian struggle has grown substantially across the Australian left, including in the Greens. The Greens now make vague calls for Palestinian liberation without specifying if this means a two-state solution, or the necessary disestablishment of Israel.

Regardless, they make no mention of Israel's role as a base for US imperialism in the region,

A second "Greenslide" success failed to materialise at the 2024 Queensland state elections |PHOTO: The Australian

nor do they denounce the Arab regimes as Western collaborators necessary for Israel's genocide. The only road to Palestinian liberation is to sweep aside the imperialists through a regional wave of socialist revolutions. The Greens fundamentally cannot promote this anti-imperialist program as a party that upholds capitalism.

We therefore can't expect progress to come from the Greens on the question of Palestinian liberation. Such contradictions between the liberatory movements they incorporate, and their petit-bourgeois base doom the Greens electoral project to inevitable failure and disintegration.

Wait, why is their electoral project doomed?

The most simple reason for a leftist to write off the electoral road offered by the Greens is that it is impossible for them to form government. The narrow, middle-class support base of the party limits their only substantial support to small pockets of bohemian suburbs (their support even in these few areas is by no means stable, as we will see later).

Many in the party have expressed a desire to connect with the working-class and see their cost-of-living policies alone as a valid way to win over the workers. To win in the working-class suburbs, they would need to become a mass party of workers, meaning they would have to work within the unions, and the workers movement. As mentioned above, they are a petit-bourgeois party, and as such cannot meaningfully do this.

Were it possible for them to become a mass workers party, it would mean abandoning the petit-bourgeois for an explicitly working-class, and class-conscious program. While at such a hypothetical point they can easily gain more success, they would cease to be the Greens.

A Long, Steady Ascent, or Professional Losers? (1992 – 2022)

After federating in 1992, the Greens would, with ebbs and flows, increase their elected representation in the federal Senate over a period of three decades. In this time they would gain a few lower house seats here and there in the various state Parliaments. Greens electoral success seemed to be growing, albeit at a glacial pace. This supposed growth was seemingly vindicated by the 2022 "Greenslide", in which three candidates for seats in inner-Brisbane were elected to the federal Parliament's Lower House. This was the party's greatest electoral success to date.

The Queensland Greens Disaster of 2024

Things seemed to be on the up, and it was anticipated that the wins in the federal

election could be replicated. In the 2024 local and Queensland state elections, seats were targeted based on whether they overlapped with the electorates they had won in 2022. They spruiked a goal of surging from one to six seats on the Brisbane City Council. They barely edged out a second seat.

Demoralised, but seemingly not humbled, they were still keen to set lofty goals for the following state election in October. With only two sitting state MPs, they would publicly state their goal of winning up to ten(!) seats in suburban Brisbane. They went on to lose one of their seats, and barely retained the other.

There are no two ways around what happened: it was an unmitigated disaster. Unfortunately, even a resounding defeat cannot stop some from teasing out optimistic conclusions; some members are eager to tell their detractors that internal polling has found that some forty percent of voters thought(!) about casting a vote for them. This thought process can be summed up in one word: cope; you would need to be in denial of reality to think this analysis is in any way profound.

And how did this happen?

There have been a multitude of reasons given for the poor showing at this year's elections. The right, both in and outside of the party, blames the party's expressions of solidarity with Palestine. It is undoubtedly true that some have changed their vote on this basis, and this reflects the contradiction of incorporating an anti-colonial movement into a party of small business owners. It is likely the party's right-wing will use this as a basis to intensify its struggle for power.

Others have switched their vote thanks to progressive policies by the Miles Labor government such as 50 cent public transport fares, and the disproportionate focus of Labor electioneering on Greens-held seats. Most of these are probably to some extent true in the context of this year's elections. Though, ultimately, the party's internal contradictions are what prevent it from cohering a stable electorate that lasts more than one election cycle.

Socialists in the Greens are dedicated to building a party of the Left that can fight for

Max Chandler Mather at a CFMEU rally | PHOTO: The Advertiser

workers. Their organising efforts therefore need to be directed into a party that can carry out this fight, and win. If the Greens have already reached their maximum possible level of "success", these members need to ask themselves the question: "What is the point in being here?"

Is there an alternative?

The party of the Left needs to be the revolutionary party of the working-class, that is, the Communist Party. This is due to the class's unique, historical role as the revolutionary class. It is the global, heterogeneous class that constitutes the vast majority of the world's population. When acting as a class-conscious agent under its own party, it is not mired by the nationalist, profit-driven interests of small business owners that parties like the Greens base themselves in.

To build such a party, we need to build workers' power. This power must be built wherever the workers are: the workplaces, the unions, the working-class suburbs, and the universities. Of course, the party should not limit itself from including members of other social classes, but the basis of its power must be in the proletariat.

Leftists in the Greens are pessimistic, and lengthening their stay will only continue to bind the socialist left to a defeated, emaciated electoral project. The way out is simple: the Left must abandon opportunists of all stripes and begin the long work of rebuilding the Communist Party in Australia.

The Human Species and the Earth's Crust

Amadeo Bordiga

The theme of the last "filo del tempo", "Public utility, private heaven", was intended to show that in the present day social economy, initiative and choice always remains with those who pursue speculative profit, not only when they carry on their private business with their own means and on their own terrain, but also in the case of "public works" where the terrain is dedicated to "motives of general interest", and removed from the old individual form of property.

Initiative, choice, the decision concerning the opportunities from such or such a project (a road, a railway, a waterway, a public construction project, the development of urban or rural areas, coastal construction etc.), as well as the priority given to one or other of these works, seem to be dictated by a centre which has a superior vision of the general interest. In reality they are, on the contrary, always planned, imagined, supported, promoted and completed or, as they say these days without euphemism, "launched" (in the real sense you launch boats, and in the economic sense you launch a classic series of financial expenditures) by a private group which makes its calculations and expects a very high profit.

What's more, while for an entirely private company the financing is onerous and carries an important risk (the possibility of an unfavourable result involving a loss rather than the gain which was hoped for), in the case of works and enterprises bearing the holy stigmata of the public good, it is much easier to obtain funds at good rates, and it is almost mathematically impossible for the profit to be limited, in never mind negative. In effect, for the interest to be paid and the expected expense to be recovered, in this case there is the means to make the eternal taxpayer responsible for the budget, so we can just as well speak of: the work of private use and public fraud.

This question doesn't only allow us to understand certain recent developments in the capitalist economy, commonly called the controlled or managed economy, which represents nothing new qualitatively or anything unforeseen quantitatively (even if it spreads more and more). It also leads on to the general problematic of marxism vis-à-vis the social process, and to the demonstration, of universal value, that within all the great things that the capitalist epoch makes a show of today, it has not had as its primary purpose or its motor force any aim other than the interest of the dominant class, of its members or its groups, and never the general good of society. The question which we are talking about, while limiting ourselves to the works which transform the great cities, always vaster and more ostentatious in the present epoch, always more celebrated and praised to the skies as the masterpieces of civilisation and wise administration, is linked to the question of the settlement of man the animal on the earth, and to the solution, not civilised and perfect but insane and monstrous, given to it by the capitalist mode of production. There we can find it in the framework of the atrocious contradictions that revolutionary marxism denounces as proper to today's bourgeois society. These contradictions do not only concern the distribution of the products of labour and the relations which result from this among the producers, but they also apply in an indissociable manner to the territorial and geographical distribution of the instruments and equipment of production and transport, and therefore the distribution of people themselves. In no other historical period, perhaps, has this distribution presented such disastrous and appalling characteristics.

Yesterday

It is not without great delight that we quote those passages where Marx rails against and condemns the conceptions of George Hegel, while according to some eternal dilettantes he always displayed the most reverential fear towards his "master".

The subversive and radical interpretations that marxism has given to reality suppose, by their very structure, an assimilation of all the great contributions of the previous epochs.

Marxism does not neglect to explain any utterance, any system transmitted by history, even those which bourgeois "culture" stupidly mocks with a presumptuous arrogance. It is rather a clique of preachers who have eliminated and swept away everything else: these are the philosophers of law and the ideologues of the human person. The reply to this that we are about to concern ourselves with is one of the numerous passages which illustrates this in a dramatic fashion.

Marx showed that all value, in the private and market economy, must be measured in human social labour invested in "goods" of any kind. In consequence, all accumulation, any reserve of new value and new wealth, must correspond to work done and "not consumed", that is to say, to a marketable difference between the work obtained and the quantity of means of subsistence granted to the worker's consumption. In the course of this imposing process of thought, he had to demonstrate that the wealth consumed not only by the proletarian and the capitalist, but also by the landowner, can have no other origin. In economic terms: land rent is only a part of surplus value, deducted from the value created from the sum of social effort on the part of the workers.

This thesis ruled out one of the opposing theses, that proposed by the Physiocratic school, which states that wealth and value can come out of the ground, before it even receives the contribution of human labour.

At the present stage in history, and given the measurements of the land, populations and foodstuffs, we have to put paid to any idyllic vision which represents a small, serene and naïve humanity, which lives on fruit which falls into its mouths from spontaneously growing trees under which it lies, singing and embracing. This, they say, is what happened on Tahiti and on the other chains of islands in the Pacific, where an eternal spring reigned. But the colonists of modern capitalism got there in due course and, in place of free love in the open air, they imported mercantile love and brothels. As the French rightly say (the pun is in the pronunciation): civilisation and syphilisation – paper money and the sickly spirochete.

Subsequently Marx deals with the relation between man and the earth. For us, man is the Species; for bourgeois gentlemen, man is the individual.

Marx said right at the beginning – and we haven't forgotten – that he deals with property in land as it presents itself when the capitalist mode of production is fully developed. He knew very well that in the majority of countries you could still find vestiges of other historical forms of landed property: the feudal form, which supposes that the direct producer only constitutes a simple accessory of the soil (in the form of serfs, slaves etc.), and which therefore had the characteristic of a personal domination over the mass of people; the form of fragmented property, which supposes that the agricultural labourers have not been "dispossessed of their means of labour" – land, instruments of labour and spare supplies.

Marx therefore made an abstraction of the precapitalist forms, and considered agriculture organised on the basis of the following elements: the landowner, who periodically received a rent from the capitalist farmer; the farmer who brings the capital of exploitation and pays wages; the mass of agricultural workers. Marx said that to do his research it was enough to consider as absolutely analogous the capitalist manufacturing firm and the agricultural enterprise, the capitalist who produces industrial goods and the one who produces foodstuffs. For the sake of clarity, he reduced even the latter to wheat, the essential food of modern-day people. It remains only necessary to explain the function of a third personage, who is (generally) absent from manufacturing, but who is always present in capitalist agriculture: the landowner. And we still need to examine the source of his wealth, or land rent.

The development of capitalism imposes the elimination of feudal agrarian forms and small landed property, the liberation of all serfs and the maximum ruin of the direct cultivators, which dumps them all into the proletariat without land or reserves (reserves are a stock of objects of consumption, or money sufficient to acquire them when there is no other source of revenue). However, as Marx showed, the

only form of ownership of the earth which is compatible with full capitalism is not a necessary condition for it. In other words, landed property will disappear in front of industrial capitalism; or yet, as is illustrated magnificently all the way from the passages which come from The Poverty of Philosophy in 1847 to one of the last letters Marx ever wrote (read at our meeting in Milan, in September), the suppression of private property in soil does not mean the passage to socialism.

It is true, as we shall see later, that landed property differs from other kinds of property in that it appears superfluous and harmful at a certain stage of development, even from the point of view of the capitalist mode of production.

As was said in Milan, the "later" came after the dramatic digression of Engels which closed what we have of Book 3 (in Chapter 52, while here we are in Chapter 37): here the manuscript breaks off... As for us, we contend that the crowning point of the work must be the chapter-programme on the social passage of capitalist production to communism.

After these explanations, always necessary even if we repeat ourselves, according to the method that we have decided to apply, let's recall the Marxist definition of property in land (as opposed to the pseudo-definition of idealist philosophy) as stated by Marx in a footnote. We only have to transcribe them:

Landed property is based on the monopoly by certain persons over definite portions of the globe, as exclusive spheres of their private will to the exclusion of all others.

And now the note:

Nothing could he more comical than Hegel's development of private landed property. According to this, man as an individual must endow his will with reality as the soul of external nature, and must therefore take possession of this nature and make it his private property. If this were the destiny of the "individual", of man as an individual, it would follow that every human being must be a landowner, in order to become a real individual. Free private ownership of land, a very recent product, is according to Hegel, not a definite social relation, but a relation of man as an individual to "nature", an "absolute right of man to appropriate all things" (Hegel, Philosophie des Rechts, Berlin, 1840, p 79) This much at least is evident the individual cannot maintain himself as a landowner by his mere "will" against the will of another individual, who likewise wants to become a real individual by virtue of the same strip of land. It definitely requires some thing other than goodwill [here Marx, employing with a fine irony the Hegelian jargon which he had been a master of since 1840, wants to say: for that, you need the good will of truncheon blows]. Furthermore, it is absolutely impossible to determine where the "individual" draws the line for realising his will – whether this will requires for its realisation a whole country, or whether it requires a whole group of countries by whose appropriation "the supremacy of my will over the thing can be manifested." Here Hegel comes to a complete impasse. "The appropriation is of a very particular kind; I do not take possession of more than I touch with my body; but it is clear, on the other hand, that external things are more extensive than I can grasp. By thus having possession of such a thing, some other is thereby connected to it. I carry out the act of appropriation by means of my hand, but its scope can be extended" (p.90). But this other thing is again linked with still another and so the boundary within which my will, as the soul, can pour into the soil, disappears. "When I possess something, my mind at once passes over to the idea that not only this property in my immediate possession, but what is associated with it is also mine. Here positive right must decide, for nothing more can be deduced from the concept" (p. 91). This is an extraordinarily naive admission "of the concept", and proves that this concept which makes the blunder at the very outset of regarding as absolute a very definite legal view of landed property belonging to bourgeois society – understands "nothing" of the actual nature of this landed property. This contains at the same time the admission that "positive right" can, and must, alter its determinations as the requirements of social, i.e., economic, development change.

Here ends the very important note by Marx. Idealist speculation searches in vain for the relation between the Person and the land-thing, and describes it as a projection, from the beginning, of mysterious magnetic fluid

emanating from will. Marxism straightaway eliminates the fetish of the person. It sets out to study the extremely variable historical process of relations between people, as a species and as a society , and agricultural production. Finally it establishes positively the process in the reality of the relation between classes, that is to say between people who, in rural production, have different tasks and share differently in the product and the benefits. Philosophy and all the bourgeois philosophers are completely helpless here!

The passages from Hegel, and the rough mise au point of the pupil Karl, bring into clear relief to what extent the tiresome grumbling of the Stalino-Turinian marxists stinks of Hegelianism. When a self-described Marxist has made sacrifices to those two tragic theses: the dignity of the human Person on the one side, and the division of the land amongst the peasants on the other, there is no need to wait for a third piece of stupidity: he's already renounced everything.

In the chapter under study, therefore, Marx only skims through the history of occupation, of organis-ation of the land by humans, before the present capitalist phase. However, he explains at the start that there is no simple "right to the surface" in which the present positive right is established as ownership of land, transmissible by exchange against money. It is a matter of a stage in the disposition of human installation on the earth's "crust", in other words in a layer which extends above and below the surface of the soil. In effect, Marx signals not only that in the expression of land is included the waters which are the object of economic use, but that in the development of the theory of landed rent he deals with rent seen not only as applying to the produce of the fields, but also to mines, built-up areas, construct-ion and any other installation fixed to the ground, whether it is found above or below the surface.

The utilisation of all these forms requires the provision of financial capital to seed, labour, harvest, construct, dig, build etc. The "cadastral" [land registration] right which attributes each piece of land to its owner, establishes that the entrepreneur who raises the capital cannot put it to work if he doesn't obtain permission to cross over the boundary and set to work with all his labourers and employees. He thus opens a temporary breach in the monopoly of the owner, who the "positive right" – an exception made to that supreme finesse which is expropriation by force – cannot prevent from lying down on his chaise longue right in the middle, with his belly to the sun (or to the moon), and protected by a surrounding wall or a series of notices: entry forbidden. A monopoly, therefore, and not an ownership like that of objects of consumption. Now, the permission to break or interrupt the monopoly has to be paid for, and, in effect, the capitalist entrepreneur pays an annual rent. His gain will be diminished accordingly. He will deduct this sum from the total profit which he will have left after paying one thousand for the labour and selling the wheat for two thousand. Thus the land by itself, and even the calories radiating from the sun do not give anything to man on the chaise longue; and yet he pockets a rent, which has been subtracted from the labour-value produced by those who show their backs, and not their bellies, to the blazing rays of the sun and who rip, dripping with sweat, at the fertile womb of the soil, virgin and not mother.

Marx showed that the law of the falling rate of profit of capital, more than any other factor, raises to the maximum the value of the land monopoly, and that the maximum increase is produced for the forms which are not purely agrarian, such as mines and building land, particularly in the area around large towns.

Before going any further, and ending up with Marx at the demonstration that the modern relation between people and the land is the worst of all the ways of using, or to put it another way, "equipping" the earth's crust by means of all the various kinds of installation, we will very quickly retrace the history of its conquest by man. Clearly we are not going to seek out the psychic-like fingerprints of acts of will, but the physical effects of labour and the efforts of generations, accomplished not because anyone set out with reason or consciousness, but because in the beginning there was need, and at various stages of its development, human collectivity providing in various ways for its security, its life and its multiplication, in a diverse succession of successes and catastrophes.

Man is not the only animal who leaves a trace on the earth's crust, and is not content to travel around on light feet brushing gently on the surface and leaving hardly a trace, like the fish who swims in the sea or the bird who flies in the air. In one sense man is inferior and the dream of Leonardo da Vinci has still not succeeded in detaching him from the ground with only the power of his muscles and without the help of vehicles – which, besides, were inaugurated by a sheep. In the water, despite his bathyscaphe made from the finest steel, Piccard can only manage a descent of a few hundred metres, while life pulses in the submarine depths and was perhaps born there. On the solid crust, man perhaps has primacy over the other zoological species, but he was not the first to leave footprints or construct buildings. Numerous animals prowl about in the subsoil boring out galleries, and the mysterious animal plant-colony, the coral, has constructed from its chalky corpses something greater than our edifices: veritable islands which we consider as an integral part of the geophysical landscape.

The first humans were nomadic just like the beasts, and consequently had no interest in creating "fixed installations", such that the first acts of will, like Hegel said, did not give a soul to the soil, to the turf or the rock, but only to a branch torn down to serve as a club or a stone carved into an axe. On the other hand, they were already preceded by other "colonising" creatures of the earth's crust and authors of "stable structures", and not only fixed things, but in certain cases things endowed with movement, if it is true that the beaver has a house and the elephant has a graveyard.

Let's leave aside the nomad who only left fleeting and often dispersed traces on the earth's surface, and approach the first sedentary societies. We won't try to retrace history. It took millennia before, under the pressure of demographic growth and thanks to the first technical resources of labour, there appeared real constructions going beyond the tent of the Bedouin or the ice cabin of the Lapp. Man set out to dig the earth first of all to extract the rocks and the cement which would enable him to construct the first houses and buildings under the ground, and he imprinted on the wild crust the first paths, channels, numerous camps and trails which have resisted being uprooted and swept away over the centuries.

While the predominant production was agricultural, the density of population was low, needs were limited (even if this already meant a demand for fixed territorial sites and the necessity of defending them, not only against natural calamities, but also against attack, invasion or destruction by other human groups), and the exchange of products of the land remained at an embryonic stage, the form of "kitting out of the earth's crust" by human societies would conserve the traits of an intervention of limited depth. The greatest part, by far, of the space required by people was subjected to no intervention other than cultivation, which doesn't involve breaking into the ground beyond a few tens of centimetres. Obviously it makes sense to ignore terrain which is not very fertile or which is too exposed to the danger of flooding, unhealthy conditions, high winds, tides, drought, which is situated a too great an altitude etc. Between the cultivated fields, would be a few rudimentary habitations for the farmers, a modest network of roads to be travelled on foot or even on horseback, rare hydraulic constructions to assist rural techniques... From time to time there might be a castle where a lord or a military commander lives and, installing themselves little by little around it, the village houses of the first artisans. In the middle ages, even more than in the Classical period, towns were rare, lightly populated, distant from each other, and connected by unreliable roads travelled by light vehicles pulled by animals. The ventures of some maritime peoples go back a long way and were sometimes astounding, but maritime and port cities did not have a great importance, at least not until the twelfth century, given the weak impact of maritime traffic on the general economy.

The dispersed population clearly outnumbered the population concentrated in towns.

We know very well this segment – one of the most oafish – of the idealist symphony: it is urban agglomeration which has produced schools, culture, civilisation, the participation of the whole people in political life, freedom,

human dignity! It's always like this: the more we see individuals crammed in their thousands and millions into stinking rabbit hutches, military abattoirs, barracks and prisons, the more we see them reduced to pulp, because of this very concentration, by bombs (atomic or not), the more the Phariseean adoration of the Individual spreads its infection.

Above all, urban agglomeration has produced illnesses and epidemics, superstition and fanaticism, physical and criminal degeneration, the formation of the lumpen-proletariat and of an underworld worse than the highwaymen of previous centuries, the terrifying rise of all the statistics relating to crime. On this level the richer and more advanced countries are ahead of the backward countries and the prize goes to those with the biggest urban units.

Here it is not a question of applauding the situation of the rural masses today, those rare examples of a real agricultural proletariat who are really housed in modern habitations spread out over an area, and not concentrated in towns of more than fifty thousand people. The small farmer who lives in a log cabin on his little piece of land doesn't offer us an image of anything desirable either. On the subject of this layer of the population, an object today of adoration from fascists, the democratic and Stalinist false left or the Catholic centre, here is what Marx had to say:

Small landed property creates a class of barbarians standing halfway outside of society, a class combining all the crudeness of primitive forms of society with the anguish and misery of civilised countries.

But (and it would be useful to complete the description of this picture some time) the results of big rural property and modern industry are scarcely any more brilliant. The first leads to the progressive reduction of the agricultural population and the fertility of the soil, the second destroys "labour-power, hence the natural force of human beings". In this, Marx adds, they go hand in hand. And for him, as for us, the healthy and vigorous coarseness of the barbarian peoples was less dire than the degeneration of the masses in the capitalist epoch, the epoch that our enemies designate as civilisation – a word used well here, and in its proper sense, because it means the urban way of life, the way of life proper to those great agglomerated monsters which are the bourgeois metropolises.

Today

We are not dealing here with urban development and its effects from the point of view of the whole of social development, but only from the "technical" basis of the organisation of the land, which tends to transform it, without much concern for the needs of agriculture, into a space really equipped with all the general installations which create the platform of urban complexes – transforming it into a space, to put it another way, which has roads, sewers, equipment for the distribution of water, electricity and gas, installations for lighting and heating, communication and public transport of all kinds. Up until the Classical era, spaces left by cities swept away or razed by various devastations remained, despite the lower density of equipment and their weaker attachment to the subsoil, arid and unfit for any cultivation, as enclaves of desert in the midst of cultivated fields. Thus the extension of the town to the detriment of the countryside, which accompanied the influx of people into the former, involved a very different and much more profound manner of transforming the earth's crust, and this new technical fact engendered new economic relations of value and rent (as defined by Marx and Engels) and thus of social relations – and the programmes of social revolution.

According to modern technicians, the system of big concentrations of people is "economic" in terms of the expenses required, in every way, to "install the population on its territory". But "economic", for them, means adapted to profit and to the monopoly of the dominant class. They would burst out laughing on seeing a proposal for a more dispersed and uniform organisation, and would claim that the network, very different in this case, of all the systems of supply and drainage for habitations and people, would lead to excessive costs. But this is personified in the most extreme way by applied science, which is supposed to be animated by an incessant progress while it is more and more reduced, under the pressure of wheeling and dealing, to a jumble of lies,

calculations and consciously incorrect deductions, and an terrible entanglement of superstitions and clichés.

Italy, an extremely densely populated country, has more than 150 inhabitants on average per square kilometre. But in the towns, or at least in the centre of the towns, there are 400 inhabitants per hectare, that's 40,000 per square kilometre, without considering the most disastrous cases. The density there is therefore more than 250 times greater than the average, and the ratio is even higher if we compare the average urban density with the rural average. While the "economic policy" of capitalism tends to further exacerbate this terrible contradiction, revolutionary policy will frontally attack it with radical measures.

Modern technology claims to have created masterpieces with the massive unitary infrastructures which allow the provisioning of a city with water and lighting, which make its congested transport function, which look after its roads, take away its waste and destroy them to make them inoffensive, that is to say by mineralising the organic part, or transporting them great distances, into the rivers or the sea. Naturally, it scorns the type of rural organisation in which each farm, or each group of farms, resorts to almost "natural" means to resolve the problems of supplying water or disposing of rubbish.

The young graduate fresh out of university and a reader of fashionable journals would therefore grimace if he read the following passage from Engels (The Housing Question, 1872), and would condemn it as backward and "superseded" by history and brilliant modern applications. Here, Engels responds to those who see as utopian the abolition of the opposition between town and countryside under the pretext that this opposition is natural or, more exactly, is a consequence of history:

The abolition of the antithesis between town and country is no more and no less utopian than the abolition of the antithesis between capitalists and wage workers. From day to day it is becoming more and more a practical demand of both industrial and agricultural production. No one has demanded this more energetically then Liebig in his writings on the chemistry of agriculture, in which his first demand has always been that man shall give back to the land what he takes from it, and in which he proves that only the existence of the towns, and in particular the big towns, prevents this.

Liebig! Our youngster will say, what an old idea! He lacked all the data that we have today, after almost a century of research in all areas, chemical, biological and agronomic! Liebig is also cited by Marx, and if today we still have more confidence in him than in the modern universities, it is because more than all the present experimental data he lacked something particularly notable: the grants and salaries distributed by Montecatini or Agfa.

When one observes how here in London alone a greater quantity of manure than is produced by the whole kingdom of Saxony is poured away every day into the sea with an expenditure of enormous sums, and when one observes what colossal works are necessary in order to prevent this manure from poisoning the whole of London, then the utopian proposal to abolish the antithesis between town and country is given a peculiarly practical basis. And even comparatively insignificant Berlin [but certainly not today, in 1952] has been wallowing in its own filth for at least thirty years.

On the other hand, it is completely utopian to want, like Proudhon, to transform present-day bourgeois society while maintaining the peasant as such. Only as uniform a distribution as possible of the population over the whole country, only an integral connection between industrial and agricultural production together with the thereby necessary extension of the means of communication – presupposing the abolition of the capitalist mode of production – would be able to save the rural population from the isolation and stupor in which it has vegetated almost unchanged for thousands of years.

We should not consider as outmoded the thesis of Liebig which says that the rotating cycle of organic matter necessary to life will become deficient if we relinquish the waste of humans, and part of that of animals. Yet today this abandonment is an accomplished fact, justified in the name of a deceitful urban hygiene, which would be opposed to the precepts of speculative profit if it put in doubt

the necessity of cramming huge masses of humans into zones where the subsoil is equipped with the network of urban services, and limiting them to breathing by "iron lung". All the modern research on the perspectives for food production, taking account of the growth of population, from the extent of cultivable land and energy calculations of heat and available chemical methods, conclude that a food shortage is approach-ing. The only possible compensation may be constituted by "plankton" from the waters of the sea, that is to say by the miniscule bodies of tiny animals which populate the seas, which can be extracted with appropriate means into a kind of tinned food. We can also foresee that, thanks to the atomic manipul-ations of chemistry, it will be possible to synthesise nutrient pills (we know the response of the lady who was told that in future children will be produced in a laboratory: it is truly admirable, but I think that we'll always return with pleasure to the old system!). But the fact is that, setting aside these futuristic visions, the cycle of the land, agriculture-animals-humans, today is deficient, particularly in substances containing nitrogen. Why then neglect the enormous losses due to the present systems of sterilisation of waste (for sterilisation all that's needed is a strong dilution and a few hours) while the mineral reserves of some types of fertiliser are close to exhaustion? The human species thus destroys innumerable masses of calories in this vital sector, as it does with the preservation of dead bodies. Don't worry: we don't want to industrialise corpses like the Nazis did. Anyway, the sum of waste excreted by a man in the course of an average life represents around 300 times the weight of his body. But by replacing the cemeteries by some other system, even mineralising corpses, we can gain cultivable land. Today this would be for the promoters of tempting building land – but let's have no confusion about this, it's not on their behalf that we're taking up the cudgels.

When we plan the first unitary "projects" to achieve a uniform network of infrastructure on the earth's crust in which man will no longer be either peasant or townsman, we are situating ourselves therefore, with Marx and Engels, not on the terrain of utopia or vague hypotheses, but in the framework of a precise post-revolutionary and post-capitalist programme. Bourgeois democracy cries out in horror if, to all the other freedoms of the citizen, we want to add the freedom... to grow fat from the soil. As for bourgeois democracy, it has stooped so low as to renounce the freedom to breathe. The black fog which has attacked the great city of London paralysed all activity for several weeks, while it deposited the fine coal dust secreted from the thousands of chimneys around the metropolis into the lungs of those who ventured into the streets, and rendered completely useless the magnificent systems of lighting and transport, as well as all the factories and other places of work; so much so that it was the thieves and hoodlums who largely profited from it.

We have therefore gone well beyond the equilibrium between the "interests" of the townsman and those of the countryman, which is the question in the latest declarations of Stalin. Here it is a question of an objective which capitalism pursues in vain, while that of the socialist revolution is to go beyond social classes, and therefore to suppress the possibility that social groups can secure improvements and well-being at the expense of other groups.

The capitalist system and its supposed modernisation of the most ancient systems wants something for the crust of our planet which is completely irrational. The question is no longer about sharing out the product of such an enterprise. It is no longer a question of the economy, understood as dispute about mercantile or monetary wealth. It is a matter of physically introducing a totally different type of technical equipment for the soil and the subsoil. Perhaps we can leave some of the existing equipment standing here and there for archaeological purposes, some masterpieces of the bourgeois epoch maybe, so that those who accomplished this centuries-old work, only possible after the world revolutionary explosion, can remember them.

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Capitalism and Ecology: from the Decline of Capital to the Decline of the World

Paul Mattick

The historical character of nature follows from the Second Law of thermodynamics, discovered more than a hundred years ago by Carnot and Clausius, spelling an increase in entropy ending in heat death. Our earthly life depends on the continuous supply of energy from solar radiation, which decreases with increasing entropy, however slowly. The period of time involved is indefinite from the human point of view, too gigantic to be taken into practical consideration. Nevertheless, the entropy law has a continuous, direct influence on the earth and therefore on the fate of humankind. Apart from the sun, the mineral wealth of the earth provides for the satisfaction of human energy needs. Its exploitation, however, hastens the transformation of "free" into "bound" energy, that is, energy no longer available for human use and degrading towards heat death. In other words, the available energy sources can only be utilized once. With their exhaustion human life would come to an end, and indeed very long before the cooling of the sun, as all the natural riches of the earth contain no more energy than two days' sunlight.

For humanity, therefore, the Second Law of thermodynamics comes down to the limitation of natural wealth. The more slowly it is extracted, the longer humanity can live; the faster it is utilized, the sooner we will reach our end. Since consumption varies with the size of the population, the moment at which the world will collapse is connected with the population problem. In order to delay this collapse, population growth must be limited and the consumption of natural resources be decreased. To this problem, raised with regard to the capitalist world by the Club of Rome, Wolfgang Harich has turned with regard to communism, which has up to now similarly been engaged in endless economic growth.

The old saying fits Harich: "The cat won't leave the mouse alone." His many years in Walter Ulbricht's prisons have not been able to break his spirit of opposition. As after June 17, 1953 he turned against the Stalinist course in the DDR, in the interest of the DDR itself, so today he turns against the growth ideology reigning in that country, to save the world by means of communism. After 1953 the DDR should have come closer to the West in order to master its inner contradictions; today the ecological problems raised in the West should be tackled by the East, in order to prevent the destruction of the world. The abolition of capitalism is thus for Harich not only the goal of communist politics but the only adequate means to move to a world without growth, on which depends the long-term survival of the human race. He expressed his views in interviews with Freimut Duve, with the hope that they would not again be misunderstood in the DDR.

Neither Marx nor classical economics related their theories to the entropy law. Malthus, however, opened up the population problem for debate and Ricardo saw the tendency to declining returns from the land as a limit to capitalist development. In this way they apologetically portrayed specifically capitalist contradictions as natural and unalterable processes. These theories were developed at a time when agriculture still dominated the economy and industrial development was making its initial take-off. Although production is determined by nature and human beings, Marx's and Engels's chief attention was directed not to natural limitations but to those due to the capitalist mode of production, since the world—seen as nature—was still quite under-populated, and the "overpopulation" of which Malthus wrote was a direct result of capitalism. Of course, an increasing population presupposes the increasing productivity of labor, and this, in turn, presupposes changes in social structure. "The more I go into the stuff," Marx wrote Engels, "the more I become convinced that the reform of agriculture, and hence the question of property based on it, is the alpha and omega

Paul Mattick (1904-1981) with linguist Zellig Harris | PHOTO: Historical Materialism

of the coming upheaval. Without that, Father Malthus will turn out to be right."

In the light of the dominance in the DDR of the ideology of growth, which is supposed to take the development of the productive forces beyond any reached so far, Harich seeks to legitimate his interest in ecology with references to Marx and Engels and to dialectical materialism. Citing the French Communist G. Biolat, he maintains that "the development of ecology expressed a new deeply dialectical approach to the study of nature," so that his own concern "is as orthodox as one could wish." Ecology concerns itself with the "reciprocal action between nature and society," which can only be fully comprehended by the adepts of "the dialectics of nature" and the "Marxist theory of knowledge refined by Lenin."

Now, the metabolism between humans and nature, which can also be understood as a mutual interaction, has in itself nothing to do with the question of the dialectics of nature, and will not be disputed by those for whom the dialectic has no validity. Therefore Lenin's epistemology is also not required in order to discuss ecology and the threats to it, just as his possession of this epistemology, as Harich must to his sorrow recognize, has until now contributed little to the knowledge of ecological problems. In any case, the Club of Rome is unconcerned with dialectical materialism. As in the last analysis it hardly matters even for Harich whether the dialectics of nature already included the ecological problem, it is not necessary to discuss his party-line Leninist orthodoxy. His argument rests not on the dialectics of nature but on the calculations of the Club of Rome, which start from the too rapid consumption of natural resources and the population explosion to predict a decline of humanity in the not too distant future.

There are aspects of nature which can be grasped with formal logic and others which require the use of dialectical logic. Discoveries in microphysics enforce a logic adequate to this object, which is not identical with either formal or dialectical logic. But the means for the understanding of nature and the relevance of its regularities on the human beings who investigate them give no information about the "totality" of nature and its laws of motion, which are closed to us up to now, and no doubt permanently. Even if dialectical logic would be required for the study of nature, we could draw no conclusions from this about the dialectics of nature; in contrast, the dialectic of society is visible in its economic development and class struggles. One can, of course, describe the entropy law as "dialectical," just because it implies lasting qualitative changes, especially if one traces all

economic and biological processes to their physical basis. But the Second Law of thermodynamics was discovered by physical chemistry, not by the dialectical method, and is quite sufficient to illuminate ecology from both a biological and a social point of view.

Marxism is not a natural science, and in fact not a science in the bourgeois sense, but uses scientific methods in order to discover the presuppositions and necessities of social transformation in general and of the abolition of capitalism in particular, in order to intervene practically in social processes. Laws of nature cannot be changed; they have to be accepted, although increasing understanding of them becomes a human force of production, determining the possibilities of social development. If nature as it affects human beings can thus only develop in one direction, namely its end, so long as the world exists the problems of humanity are determined by this world and must be decided within it. Even if it were true that thermodynamics is only a characteristic of an expanding universe and that in a contracting universe the opposite process would occur, leading to a new production of matter out of radiation, this has no significance for the world which would have disappeared in the mean time, together with its inhabitants.

It is also obvious without reference to the entropy principle that the metabolism between humanity and nature depends on the fruitfulness of the earth and the productiveness of its raw materials. With the exhaustion of the latter the sources of energy decline and with them the possibility of human interventions in natural processes. The world in which Marx and Engels lived knew, however, none of the nature-determined limits to production. Neither physical nor biological processes explained the unpleasant social conditions. The exhaustion of the earth's wealth and relative overpopulation were the direct result of production for profit and could be undone by the elimination of the capitalist relations of production. One could not yet speak of an ecological crisis, in particular not from a Marxist standpoint.

Are things different today? According to the Club of Rome and Harich, we are in the midst of an ecological crisis, which obliges Marxism also to go more deeply than before into the natural basis of society and into the population question raised by Malthus. Harich believes that communist scientists, if not yet in the DDR then in the USSR, "are beginning to focus with growing insight on the ecological crisis." To repeat: the problem can be summed up in three ideas—environmental overload, consumption of raw materials, overpopulation. The solution, according to Harich, lies in reversing these processes. This, however, implies the destruction of capitalist society and therefore revolutionary transformations on the global level.

According to Harich, however, we can today no longer speak of the communist revolution as it was once imagined, freeing the social forces of production from the fetters of the capitalist relations of production in order to meet growing needs, but must take up Babeuf's idea of turning back the productive forces and human needs in the direction of the pre-industrial ascetic collectivity. Marx had already emphasized that in capitalism the productive forces had become forces of destruction, "and exactly this," says Harich, " we are experiencing today." But this is a misunderstanding on Harich's part. Even considering the destructive side of capitalist development, Marx saw in communism the only possible way to a further progressive development of the productive forces, on which the overcoming of human poverty as determined by capitalism, as in general, depends. Certainly this growth of the social forces of production includes the requirement that it should no longer serve the blind drive for valorization of capital, but rational human needs, which are themselves determined by the technologico-scientific character of the additional productive forces.

Now this may turn out to be utopian, not only because of the long-lived character of capitalism but also because of limits to economic growth set by nature and not considered by Marx. The relative overpopulation Marx wrote about has, according to Harich, become absolute overpopulation, which cannot be overcome by means of a change from capitalism to communism, but only through its systematic reduction by means of population planning—

and not only in the "Third World" but on the global scale. Thus even communism allows for no further development on the basis of modern industry, but requires economic planning without growth and possibly the liquidation of forms of production already in use.

The ecological crisis discovered by the Club of Rome and others can be seen as a new attempt—similar to the efforts of Malthus and Ricardo—to explain social difficulties as the result of natural conditions, since to them the form of society appears to be natural and unchangeable. The novel element is that today there is agreement from the "Marxist" side, with either a good or a bad conscience. Of course, Harich's position differs from that of the Club of Rome in that he remains aware that even with a full understanding of the crisis situation the capitalist world is in no position to take measures to preserve human life for the distant future, even if on a more modest basis. The Club of Rome, Harich notes, indeed speaks of an expectable impoverishment and destruction of the world, but "it does not say that the rich must disappear from the picture." People are indeed ready today "to ration gasoline," but not prepared "to ration everything." But why shouldn't everything be rationed, and indeed on a socialist basis, asks Harich; "Wouldn't that already be communism?" Would it not be, "as a result of a rational distribution, Babeuf's communism, to which the workers' movement must now, having reached a higher level, turn back with a dialectical spiral movement—the negation of the negation—after the 'springs' of capitalist wealth have flowed for nearly 200 years?"

But why stop with Babeuf? Why not return to the perfect ecology of Paradise before Original Sin? The one is as much an impossibility as the other, on which Babeuf must come to grief. History cannot be made to go backwards, not even through the "negation of the negation." A rationed distribution itself presupposes productive forces which are a match for the needs of four billion people, and with this continued productive development, in order to counter the law of increasing entropy, i.e. to support the negative entropy of the living world with the least expenditure of "free" energy.

But apart from this, the rationing of which Harich speaks is not at all foreign to the capitalist world, where it is to be found, applied more or less thoroughly, in wartime (and also in "war-communism"). Besides, capitalism is based, in the form of the law of surplus value, on a form of "rationing" of proletarian living conditions, something that also characterizes the relations of production in the putatively "socialist" countries, although there surplus value can appear directly as surplus product. In fact, the existence of capital, as Harich himself explains, hangs on the continuing "rationing" of the producers, in order to satisfy the growing surplus-value requirements of accumulation. When and to whatever extent it is necessary, capital will also seek political ways to push the living conditions of the workers down to a more modest level. The expanding poverty on the global level is a product of surplus value production, the result of capitalism's "rationing" of the conditions of life of ever greater masses of people, and can therefore not be recommended as a solution to the ecological crisis. If it were a solution, capital would be in the best position to carry it through.

When Harich speaks of the necessity to reduce production and consumption, the question arises: of whom is he speaking, actually? The workers, from whom always more surplus value is being extracted? The unemployed, who can hardly keep their heads above water? The hundreds of millions in the underdeveloped countries, who suffer from malnourishment and slow (or often fast) starvation? And if absolute overpopulation and the too rapid consumption of raw materials are the causes of these sufferings, then a more just distribution cannot change much essentially. Thus, according to Harich, we must call an end to accumulation, so that social production on the basis of simple reproduction, and with zero population growth, can finally match consumption.

The capitalist relations of production and property exclude the possibility of simple reproduction. Interruption of the industrial development demanded by the pressure to accumulate brings economic crisis and the misery of a depression. From the point of view that sees the ecological crisis as already underway, this would of course be a welcome situation. But as a crisis situation without a

The club of Rome in 1972, after publishing "The Limits to Growth" | PHOTO: The Club of Rome

revolutionary contestation of the capitalist system can lead only to a new phase of accumulation, a realization of simple reproduction is reserved for communism. Indeed, in Harich's conception communism also not a reality, but its preconditions have already been established with the existence of "socialist countries." It depends on them, and on the workers' movements in the capitalist countries, whether society can preserve its natural basis. "The overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the creation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the realization of communism are," according to Harich, "the presuppositions for the social realization of the demands of the Club of Rome."

Apart from a handful of scientists, however, neither the authorities of the "socialist countries" nor the workers of the capitalist world are conscious of this important task. As Freimut Duve emphasizes, "the economic policies of all nations—without exception—are the same as if the studies of the Club of Rome had never been made." This holds also for the "socialist countries," which does not stop Harich from ascribing to them he possibility of a faster and better adaptation to the ecological crisis, as they are not subject to the pressure for expanded reproduction. Since in any case the destruction of the environment is a problem for industrial society generally, the possibility of coming to grips with this problem is in no way system-neutral. Certainly, unfortunately, the raw-materials resources of the "socialist" countries make a prior communist revolution unnecessary. But they will nevertheless finally deal with the ecological crisis, as communists "will never resign themselves to the idea that humanity is doomed to destruction."

In the meantime, it is a matter of once more swimming "against the current" and holding an image of the future to the eyes of the world, so as to indicate the pathway to escape. That the Club of Rome can only warn and make proposals, according to Harich, changes nothing in the "revolutionary explosive force" of the ecological understanding it has achieved. The implications of this understanding can only be drawn by the workers' movement and the workers' states, but they demand the revision of traditional communist ideas. "The advantages of the socialist system must be utilized, in order to regulate by planning the production of all material goods, to do optimal justice to the criteria of ecology..." To this end, says Harich, "the left-wing parties must now immediately begin to explain to the working class the reasons why which it will halt economic growth as soon as it has come to power, and impose material restrictions on the whole population, including the workers." This will

thus be a revolution not for improving but for lowering of the workers' standard of living.

It will be difficult to arouse much revolutionary enthusiasm for this project. This is Harich's greatest worry. As a truth-loving person he wishes to awaken no illusions and make clear to the workers the necessity of new privations, "as popular as possible and as unpopular as is necessary given the judgment of science." In any case we must put as much of an end as we can to prosperity thinking and the fetishism of growth, "by means of re-education, though also, when necessary, by rigorous repression, perhaps by the shutdown of whole branches of production, accompanied by legally imposed cold-turkey cures." It is clear, at least for Harich, "that for this the social ownership of the means of production, administered by the proletarian state, is the necessary precondition." But this is not enough. The proletarian state must also have the power to control individual consumption according to criteria imposed by ecology. "In the finite system of the biosphere," Harich continues, "in which communism must make its way, it must transform human society into a homeostatic stationary state which, just as it limits the continuation of the dynamic of capitalism or of socialism, also has no place for the limitless freedom of the individual. Any idea of a future withering away of the state is therefore illusory."

This "revision" of "classical Marxism-Leninism" is directed of course only against the ideology and not against the reality of the "socialist" countries, which have never, and do not now, intend to renounce "state authority and codified law" in order to realize communism in the original Marxian sense. But just as the authoritarian state, according to Harich, was necessary in order to create the "heavy industrial foundation of national self-determination" with "unexampled harshness and brutality," it is even more necessary today in order to dismantle this foundation. As Stalin "governed the country" with the goal of industrial development, so must the proletarian state, taking into its calculations the forecasts of science, utilize all necessary means to force people into a life in accordance with ecology. Babeuf's communism itself cannot be left to the workers, but can only be achieved through the unavoidable state power exercised by Marxist-Leninist parties.

To this Duve objects that one cannot speak of communism in relation to Harich's authoritarian ideas, since "the administration of want in any case will give the administrators the real power." The perpetuation of the state is naturally the perpetuation of class society and so of exploitative relations of production, which are at the same time relations of property. As state property the means of production appear in future as means of production separated from the workers. How and what is produced is subordinated not to their control but to that of state institutions, which supposedly represent the interest of society. But this society remains divided into one group of people organized through the state, who control the means of production and so the distribution of the product, and the mass of the population, who must follow their orders. This new type of society characterized by state control of the means of production appears to the bourgeoisie as state socialism, or simply socialism, but is capitalist in its relation to the workers, something which is conveniently expressed in the concept of state capitalism, although it seeks to present itself as socialism.

Once this situation is established, the social reproduction process takes place as the reproduction of state domination and social wealth grows as the increase of state power. Apart from the international competitive struggle among nationally-organized capitals, which will be even sharper thanks to the differences between the capitalist systems, the privileged class building itself up within the social relations of state capitalism has its own direct interest in the increase of the surplus product at its disposal and so for the development of the productive forces on a state-capitalist foundation. It cannot be expected freely to set limits on the productive forces, and to the extent to which it is forced in this direction it will not apply the resulting privations it to itself, but impose them on the powerless mass of the population. The ecological argument, of course, offers a good alibi.

It is already of use to Harich for the defense of the continuing backwardness of the "socialist" countries in comparison to the capitalist industrial nations. "We must transform the West-East gradient of living standards," he says, "which up to the present has limited the progress of the proletarian revolution in the industrial capitalist countries, into an East-West gradient of exemplary care for the environment, of rational, moderate, economical handling of raw materials and a quality of socialist life in accordance with it." Workers in the West, even if only after a successful revolution, are to take the lower standard of living of the East as a model and perceive their revolutionary duty in the renunciation of the few comforts which capitalism occasionally offers them. What the workers of the DDR experience should thus make clear to those in the West "that the characteristics of the DDR, as of the socialist camp in general, which we usually see as disadvantages, are advantages as soon as we measure them against the new standards of the ecological crisis."

This inversion of hitherto existing values can, however, in Harich's conception not be achieved overnight. Babeuf's communism of equals presupposes a "first socialist phase," as Marx already stressed and as exists in the DDR: i.e. a distribution not according to need but according to work performed. As it is the "proletarian state" that judges performance, this state becomes the instrument of inequality and has no other content than this inequality, or itself. But just as little as the ruling class in private capitalism is willing freely to give up its privileges, so little will the new class ruling through the "proletarian state" give up the privileges associated with it. The "socialist state" is no more able to respond to the warnings of the Club of Rome à la Babeuf than capital; it acts instead at the expense of the workers, as always, with or without the ecological crisis. And as little as the working class will be ready, under the conditions of exploitation and inequality that obtain in the capitalist countries, to set aside its needs to preserve the environment, so little will the workers of the "socialist" countries renounce an improvement of their living standard in the interest of "future generations." The class struggle, always latent, will decide the further course of economic development. If economic growth is to be halted the class struggle must also be abolished, or, to use Harich's terminology, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" under the leadership of the communist parties must be created on a global scale in order to meet the demands of the ecological crisis even in the "first phase" of communism.

The class struggle cannot of course be abolished by means of state power but only carried on in a one-sided way for a longer or shorter period, that is, through the fascist or democratic dictatorship of capital or through the "dictatorship of the working class" in the sense of "Marxism-Leninism." Just as the economic crisis arising from the capitalist relations of production sharpens class antagonisms, so must the measures for overcoming the ecological crisis, which are the same as those responding to an economic crisis, be expected to sharpen class conflicts. The continuing threat to the ruling classes will, on the one hand, push the latter to keep their power by dictatorial means; on the other, they will also seek to meet the demands of the workers halfway, in so far as this is possible. For private capital this can only be a matter of measures that lead to the resumption of capital accumulation and with it the expansion of production. To keep their power, the ruling classes of the "socialist" countries must increase the productivity of labor and expand production, committing themselves without a backward glance to the ecological consequences of further growth.

Thus the warnings of the Club of Rome fall on deaf ears everywhere, and particularly in the "socialist" countries, where a new "bourgeoisie" has come into existence on the foundation of the state. Harich conjures up a lack in understanding on the part of the "communist" authorities, which could be remedied by "scientific" insight, but the real problem is the class consciousness of a new ruling class, as strong as that of the old ruling class. It is the falsification of socialism in state socialism, the only kind of "socialism" that Harich can imagine, which allows him to make his ecological hopes depend on state dictatorship and its perpetuation.

Wolfgang Harich at his workdesk | PHOTO: Eva Kemlein

If the salvation of the world depends on the already existing "socialist" countries and future ones like them, we can abandon all hope. What Harich reproaches capitalism for, its inability to call a halt to economic growth, is as true for the state-capitalist systems posing as "socialism." His illusionary demand for "a stationary state of humanity within the system of nature" requires the simultaneous overcoming of the capitalist and state-capitalist systems and would require revolutionary movements which would not subordinate themselves unconditionally to the "judgment of science" or the state but would, without obedience to authority, make themselves at home in the world in a way corresponding to their own necessities and needs.

As such movements do not exist, we are stuck with the ecological crisis. "Science" is not responsible for the practical application or failure to apply the knowledge won by it; these are left to the governments and so to the ruling classes. It is peculiar that Harich criticizes the fetishism of growth in the name of science, since the latter is itself only an aspect of the fetishism of growth. Science is represented by people, who are not only scientists but also members of society, and it is particular social interests that determine the fields of application of science. The development of the capitalist forces of production or--what comes to the same thing--the generation of the "ecological crisis" was a process made possible by science, to an increasing extent a direct result of science and its influence on technology. It is from this environment-destroying science that Harich now expects the necessary instructions for the reconstruction of an ecological equilibrium, whose practical realization would set definite limits not only to the growth of the economy but to that of science. He speaks of course of science under the "dictatorship of the proletariat," but since this is only another name for the still existing capital-worker relation, in the form of state property, here also the development of science depends on the further growth of the productive forces, as the socially-determined interests of the scientists remain tied to the progress of state-capitalism.

This is apparently contradicted by the recognition given to the Club of Rome by Russian scientists, as well as by the attention given generally to the Club's discoveries, credited with "revolutionary explosive force." It seems astonishing that these researches have been financed by capitalist institutions and business concerns, such as the Volkswagen Foundation, to say nothing of the unexpected liberalism with which totalitarian states have allowed their academics the right to pessimistic futurology. Do we here see science as such, independent of its social

environment, opening up a free path, or are its present-day concerns also those of the ruling classes? Is this development perhaps a part of called-for long-term planning, or only a spontaneous reaction to a shortage of necessary raw materials and fuels, politically engineered in the framework of the price mechanism? Or are we here dealing with no more than a free rein given to science, which can ultimately lead only to extensive projects to give the scientists jobs and incomes? Although the ecological problem actually exists, the researches into it have almost no practical meaning. In so far as one could ascribe practical significance to them, it is a contradictory one: while they are able to explain the dreadful situation to the workers in the East and West and halt their struggle for better living conditions, an increase in surplus value or surplus product still requires progressive ecological destruction.

The absolute maintenance of an ecological balance is impossible. But today the prolongation of human existence by respecting the limits set by nature is a possibility, but one whose realization would require the end of the capitalist overexploitation of natural resources. The limits set by nature are in any case not yet the most important. What is necessary, today and tomorrow, is to end the human misery due to the capitalist relations of production, as the starting-point for a rationally planned mode of society in accordance with natural conditions—one based not on further privations but on a higher standard of living for everyone, on which the diminution of population growth depends, and which would make possible the further development of society's productive forces.

The progressive destruction of the environment is not so much the result of growing productive forces as of the development of these forces under capitalist conditions. Were capitalist production really what it is claimed to be, production for the satisfaction of human needs, the development of the productive forces would have had a character different from the actual one, with a different technology and different ecological consequences. With respect to this, enlarged reproduction with a growing population and increasing needs makes no difference in

The "Great Smog" of London in 1952 | PHOTO: Smithsonian

principle. But the development of the productive forces takes place on the basis of capitalist production relations and is thus bound to the production of capital; it can serve human needs only insofar as they coincide with the requirements of capitalist accumulation. This rules out any direct reference to true social needs and to the natural limits of social production. Under the conditions of capitalist competition, which are not abolished by monopoly capital, and to which the state-capitalist systems are subordinated as parts of a global system, the development of the productive forces advances blindly, especially as attempts are made to bring production under conscious central control on the national level. This process requires an enormous wastage of human labor power and natural resources, which would not occur (at least to the same degree) in another social system.

Although there is not much sense in it, one could calculate to what extent the expansion of capitalist production is determined by the requirements of human existence and to what extent by the specific character of the capitalist mode of production. In other words: what would production look like without all the productive and unproductive activities required by capitalism? Surely such a calculation would show that at least half of capitalist production could be dispensed with without affecting people's living conditions. The larger portion of labor performed today is unproductive, making "sense" only within the capitalist market and property relations. It could be transformed into productive labor—"productive" not in the sense of profitable but in the sense of creative of use-value--while shortening labor time. Such production, with

the disappearance of the profit principle, competition, and the unnecessary "moral depreciation" of the means of production, would bring a meaningful savings of raw materials without diminishing production to meet human needs.

Such a transformation requires a social order different from the existing ones. If we follow the calculations of the Club of Rome, it may be that--given overpopulation, the limited carrying capacity of the earth, and the drying up of sources of energy--the opportunity to make it may already have been lost. A glance at today's world production shows clearly that we cannot yet speak of an actual lack of material resources. To the contrary, and despite the short, artificially produced "energy crisis," the world is suffering from "overproduction," from an insufficient effective demand, even on the basis of a low rate of accumulation, which by itself sets limits to the expansion of production. The crisis situation we are experiencing has as yet no natural causes, but has its basis in the valorization requirements of capital. Even according to the Club of Rome, the effects of the ecological crisis will be fully visible, and take on catastrophic forms, only in "two or three generations," and then only if no steps are taken to counter it.

In the two reports produced for the Club of Rome that Harich cites a reprieve for the world seems possible by the midst of the next century. In the meantime a way must be found to move from today's "undifferentiated" growth to an "organic" growth of economy and society. This way is to be discovered thanks to a computer model that extrapolates the trend of present-day development into the future. Admittedly, the results are only a matter of probability, not of certainty. While the first report on the "limits to growth" concerned the world as a whole, dealing with the increase of the total population and the average per capita income, etc., the second report emphasizes that this sort of analysis cannot lead to a solution of the problem. The world consists of various, very different parts, which must be dealt with in particular ways, with regard for regional necessities. If the first report warned that the world system will break down in the middle of the next century, the second report predicts not the breakdown of the world but that of one or another of its regions (which would, of course, ipso facto mean the destruction of the world as a totality).

Whether fragment by fragment or all at once, the breakdown is inevitable, according to the computer's logic; it follows that it is up to "statesmen" to pull the carts out of the muck. Here we encounter the mentality of the Club of Rome's scientific experts, for example, M. Mesarovic and E. Pestel, responsible for the second report. They refer throughout not to capitalist society, but to "society" (or simply to "humanity"), threatened by nature. From their point of view the ecological crisis has its roots in activities that "arise from people's best intentions." That these intentions involve the exploitation of the workers does not occur to them; to the contrary, they are convinced "that the decrease of human labor through the exploitation of non-human sources of energy is a project with which every person must agree." They are unable to grasp that it is exactly the increase in the exploitation of human labor that makes necessary the over-exploitation of natural resources. They have either no understanding of the society in which they live or they feign a lack of understanding in order not to be offensive. But looking at their proposed solutions, it is the first of these that seems correct.

These proposals amount to a series of noncommittal forms of talk, such as emphasizing the necessity of a global solution of the ecological problem; a more balanced world economy through the simultaneous abolition of under- and over-development in the respective regions; an appropriate worldwide allocation of non-renewable raw materials and fuels; an effective population policy; a turn towards solar energy instead of more nuclear reactors; increased support for the poor countries by the rich ones; and similar praiseworthy measures. Not a word is wasted on how this program is to be put into practice. The experts are certain only that the solution of the problématique humaine requires the closest cooperative work on the world scale, since there can only be a future "when history no longer, as earlier, is determined by individuals or social classes, but through the devotion of material resources to the security of human existence." The recognition of capitalist reality is on the same

level as Harich's understanding of the "socialist" world. In both cases we have to do only with conjurations spoken into the wind.

Somehow the authors of the second report do not themselves feel quite right. As "rational" as the computer is, people are irrational. Although the computer indicates that people can be helped not through conflict but through cooperation, the computer analysis necessarily deals only with the material limits of growth. But the world is threatened by people themselves on the basis of social, political, and organizational problems, which in the last analysis spring from "human nature." Since the Club of Rome is non-partisan with respect to politics, the problems can't be discussed politically. The report notes that the quickest road to the annihilation of humankind would certainly be an atomic war; but this eventuality, like the enormous wastage of expensive resources through armaments and militarism, is not included in the framework of the problems discussed by the Club of Rome, since the world is exposed to the danger of complete destruction even without an atomic war.

A dialectician like Harich can not be satisfied with this. The distinction made by the Club of Rome between natural and social problems contradicts the "interaction" between humanity and nature. For Harich the threatened atomic war and the ecological crisis stand in a close connection. Indeed, he does not deny that there are social contradictions that drive towards war, but "in a time in which economic growth comes up against unbreachable natural limits, we must also readjust our views a little. Under the conditions of the ecological crisis natural and social factors are intertwined in previously unknown ways ... The influence of society on nature can create a situation which then in turn drives society to seek refuge in a catastrophe." It is therefore not enough to strive directly to prevent war; we must treat the ecological crisis as a possible cause of war, in order to avoid war itself.

Indeed, we had two world wars and many smaller skirmishes behind us before the threat to the ecology entered our consciousness. These wars happened not because nations fought like dogs with a bone over declining supplies of raw materials but because the capitalist competitive struggle over the surplus value extracted from the laboring population played out on a worldwide field. The competitive struggle exists under all circumstances, with or without shortages of raw materials, and thus has nothing to do with the latter but arises from the capitalist mode of production. Even when a shortage of raw materials and consumption goods leads to war instead of some other solution, this results from the form of society and not from the shortage as such. On this question, however, Harich again comes close to the Club of Rome's one-sided conception of the problem as purely ecological, with no reference to the actual capitalist world. This world is for him too, despite the "intertwining of natural and social factors," only a subordinate factor: it is the ecological crisis which can lead to war, so that avoiding war presupposes solving the ecological crisis. But war can break out tomorrow, while the ecological crisis is not expected till the middle of the next century. It can even be forestalled by an atomic war, which would provide a ghastly demonstration of humanity's destruction not by nature but by capitalism.

But is there actually an ecological crisis? The numbers produced by the computer model to which Harich and the Club of Rome refer are open to doubt from many different points of view. As the amount of raw materials and energy consumed by the industrial countries over the last 50 years can only be determined very inexactly, we are even less sure what is still available. Here we are dealing with unknown quantities, as can already be seen in the fact that estimates are continuously revised, not only because of the discovery of new reserves, but also because of improvements in methods of estimation. To give only one example: The untouched coal supplies in the United States were estimated in 1969 at 3,000 billion tons; in 1975 this quantity was increased by 23 percent on the basis of better methods of estimation. Since such mistakes of estimation, whether too high or too low, do not alter the fact that the raw materials and fuels will in the end be utilized, it does not make much sense to counterpose optimistic expectations to the pessimistic ones. But as things are, it is to be expected that

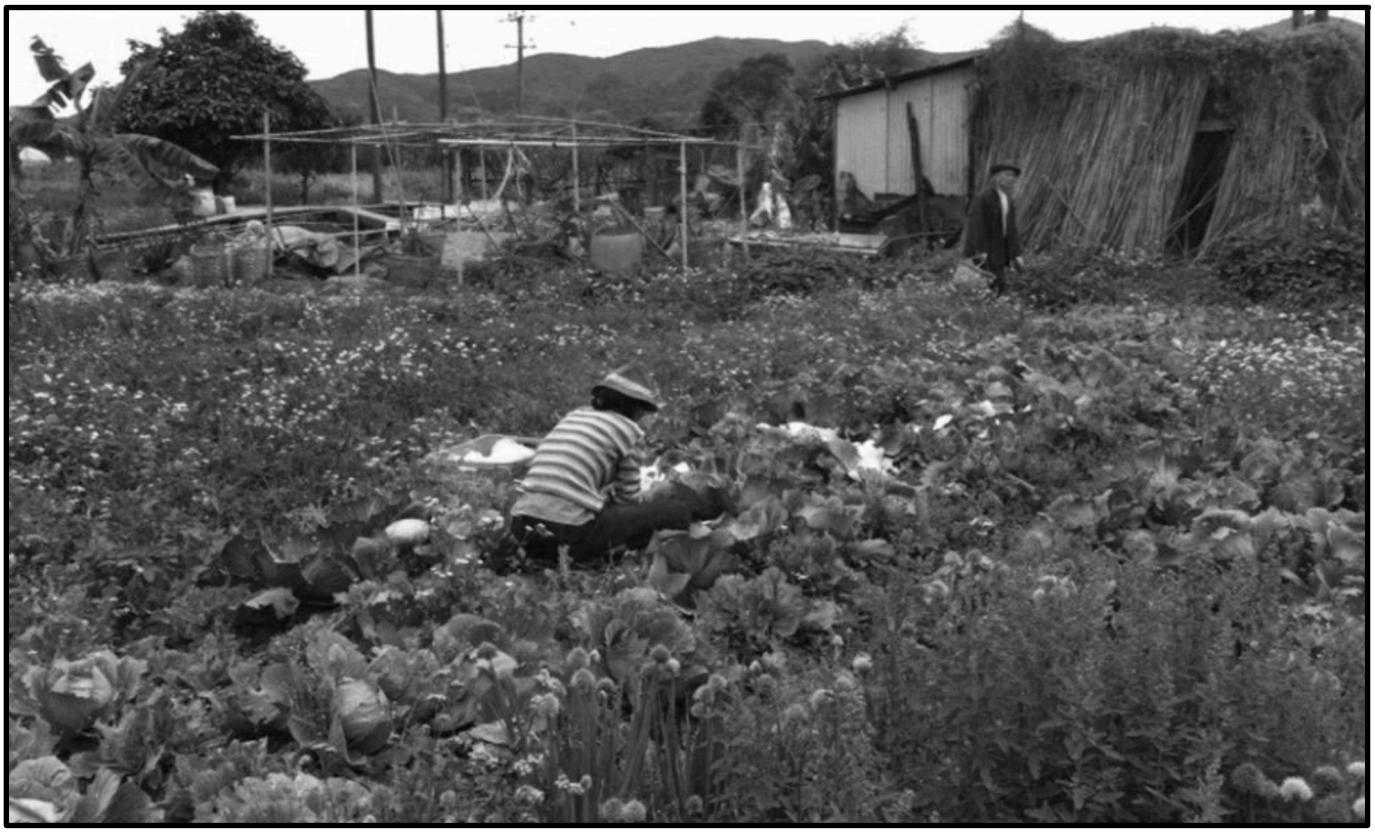
for the foreseeable future economic policy and therefore politics will not be determined by ecological considerations, but—as earlier—by capital's immanent requirement of profit production.

> "Even without the limits set by nature capital must come to an end"

The historical limit of capital is, according to Marx, capital itself. The development of the social forces of production by way of capital accumulation not only requires nonrenewable raw materials and brings with it relative overpopulation, but also leads to the tendency of the rate of profit to fall in relation to the growing mass of capital. With this the limits to capitalist expansion come into view. Even without the limits set by nature capital must come to an end. It is therefore not oriented directly to nature but to the profit rate, dependent on surplus value, which, as capital accumulates, determines the relation between nature and society. Thus the "ecological" apprehensions of the Club of Rome often have a prosaic background, as was prominent, for example, in the so-called oil crisis of 1973. Here there was not a sudden lack of oil but politically motivated price increases, following the inflation general in the world, which shifted the supply-demand relation to the benefit of the oil producers. If it were left to the market, only a considerable decline in demand could affect the monopoly price, and only with difficulty (and over time). But the increase in oil production together with increasing prices will, according to the second report of the Club of Rome, lead not only to a more rapid exhaustion of energy supplies but to a transfer of wealth and economic power from the industrial countries to the oil-producing states. Iran has already achieved minority control of the German Krupp works. Within ten years the oil states, with an accumulated capital of 500 billion dollars, could take a large part of Western capital into their hands, thus shaking the world economy, inclusive of the underdeveloped countries, to the deepest level. Without going into these ungrounded and more than dubious speculations, it can be noted that the wishes of the Club of Rome for a "global solution of the energy problem" appears to derive more from an economic than from an ecological point of view. In any case, it is at the moment not an actual lack of natural resources that menaces the world but the competitive war for global profit carried on by every possible means.

As the movement of the world is determined by profit, the capitalists concern themselves with the ecological problem only insofar as it affects profit. The capitalists have no interest in the destruction of the world; if it turns out that saving the world can be profitable, then the protection of the world will become another business--all the more because environmental destruction is itself an instrument of competition for shares of the total profit. This problem appears in the economic literature under the heading of "externality," the distinction between private effects and the social concomitant symptoms of capitalist production. Social phenomena are also ecological phenomena, as when the emission of pollutants of all sorts, which enter into natural cycles, finally destroys the necessary global balance of oxygen. In this way the destruction of the environment, which is often taken to be faster and more dangerous than the rapid use of material resources, is bound up with the exhaustion of resources. Such widely known phenomena, which can both be ascribed to profit production and also curtail profit production, affect different capitals differently and thus themselves provoke attempts to limit the destruction within capitalism. It depends on the mass of surplus value whether these attempts can be successful, i.e. on the increasing exploitation of the workers or on their "modest standard of living." On this point Harich's proposals are at one with the measures recommended by capital, as expressed by the Club of Rome.

It is not impossible that—with sufficient surplus value production—capital itself could be able to avoid the destruction of the environment, in its own interest, as long as the cost is paid by the working population. And as accumulation sets limits to surplus value, the ongoing destruction of the environment can be traced back to the limits of the capitalist mode of production. We are, that is, faced here with a social, not an ecological problem. But



Subsistence farming in South Asia | PHOTO: Blog to Express

what about overpopulation? This is a problem in itself, which will not simply vanish even with an imaginable rational management of raw materials and the end of environmental destruction. The production of means of subsistence is declining in relation to the increasing population. Is the earth becoming less fertile? Or is it simply inadequate to support the growing population?

Among other studies, one undertaken three years ago for the Club of Rome, under the leadership of H. Linnemann, showed that the global capacity for food production has grown sufficiently to support a doubling of the population. The decrease in agricultural production relative to the growing population has at present nothing to do with any limits set by nature, but originates in social relations that stand in the way of an extension of production. Moreover, the hunger existing in the world has nothing to do with the productivity of agriculture. Even a doubling of production could not eliminate it; indeed it would mostly likely increase it even more. The existence of sufficient foodstuffs is not enough to guarantee the satisfaction of human consumption needs. Commodities exist only for effective demand, and for those who need it without the capacity to pay overproduction can be even more dangerous than a crop failure caused by nature. That crop failures can also lead to hunger has, of course, nothing to do with incalculable nature, but with the social neglect of measures which, with the increase in agricultural production and the improvement of agricultural productivity, could accumulate sufficient reserves to be able to offset natural catastrophes.

In the underdeveloped, largely agrarian world, as for example in South Asia, the problem is not so much the miserliness of nature as a social class system of institutions and power relationships that stands in the way of increasing production and productivity. Besides the increasingly unsustainable subsistence economy, it is landed property, the tenant-farming system, usurious loan capital, the plantation economy, and the parasitical state bureaucracy that hinder any progressive development by maintaining the existing social structure. In the African states the specialization in the production of industrial raw materials created by the colonial system has led to a situation whose further development is today also subordinated to the capitalist crisis cycle and

the impoverishment bound up with it. Not only there, but also in the South American nations, increasing industrialization comes at the cost of agricultural production. Former exporting countries are becoming importers of foodstuffs. Russia's development into a competitive world power too has required the relative neglect of agriculture, making the importation of food necessary whenever there is a bad harvest. The increasing discrepancy between industrial and agricultural production has less to do with population growth and decreasing fertility of the soil that with the one-sided over-emphasis on industrial expansion, or capital's expansion, demanded by capitalist competition.

Of course, the population has grown enormously. Since medicine has lowered mortality figures considerably, the number of births, remaining the same, appears as a "population explosion." It is obvious, however, that the population can not continue to grow and sooner or later will have to stabilize in relation to ecological givens. But from this it does not follow that the current size of the population is responsible for the poverty existing in the world. A level of production adequate to the needs of the increasing population would very likely show that it is too soon to speak of an absolute overpopulation. The percentage growth in production and productivity of agriculture in countries like the United States and Australia exceeds by far the percentage of population increase. Although the same results cannot be achieved everywhere, even with the same methods, it is certainly still possible to increase the world's production of food meaningfully.

And with a general improvement of living conditions can we expect to see a conscious decrease in population growth. Of course, this can also be achieved through the use of state violence, the method prized by Harich. Thus in India at the moment bills have been proposed mandating forced sterilization, to be imposed on all families after their second child. From this it is only a small step to the direct extermination of excessive people. But there is also another thing: While it is so far the privilege of a minority of the world's population, the level of birth control already achieved in the developed countries demonstrates the possibility of population planning, which in the course of time could not only stabilize the population but even diminish it.

The warnings of Harich and the Club of Rome would be completely senseless if they were not accompanied by the conviction that the threatening ecological catastrophe can be prevented. The idea that this is a real possibility in itself means that whether humanity still has an indefinite future depends on society and not on nature. For Harich the destruction of capitalist production is the unavoidable presupposition for this future. Only in this way can the ecological problem find a general solution. But what he has in mind is not a revolution that might lead to a communist society, the only kind of society that would be in a position to solve the ecological problem. The Club of Rome cannot even imagine Harich's pseudo-revolution but relies on the good will and readiness of enlightened statesmen to take the measures necessary to solve the ecological problem. But we cannot expect from this quarter measures that would do away with the social structure and so with its statesmen themselves.

What, then, is to be done in this apparently hopeless situation? In general, nothing, so long as the problem is looked at from the standpoint of ecology. It is, first of all, not the thing that is most obvious that threatens the continuing existence of humankind. The "ecological crisis" is to a great extent itself a product of a situation of social crisis, and the approaching catastrophe arising from the latter is coming sooner than the ecological catastrophe. As things stand today, the great likelihood of conflicts involving atomic warfare makes concern with the ecological crisis superfluous. We need to concentrate on social processes to stop the atomic criminals of East and West. If the world's workers do not succeed in this they will also not be in a position to counter the ecological threat or to create the communist society that would make possible the further existence of humanity.

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Sometime the wolf: Theses on the 2024 US Elections

Edith Fischer

The Fall of the House of Biden

The polls are in, and the decision is final. History has rendered its judgement upon the entire world of institutional liberalism, and it has found it sorely wanting. Kamala Harris, who unified the whole of respectable society, from Dick Cheney to Alexandria Occasio-Cortez, has been tossed aside by the American voters. The House of Biden, the dreams of a restored liberal order in the wage of the political earthquake of Trumpism, has been shattered. There could not be a more thorough denunciation of the career of Joseph Robinette Biden Jr. than to see his entire political legacy devoured by the baying hordes of petit-bourgeois reactionaries that make up the ascendant MAGA Movement.

What Was Bidenism in Power?

And what a legacy! In power, Bidenism can best be understood as the left-wing of Trumpism. Under Biden's leadership, the anti-immigration policies of the Trump administration carried on in earnest. The trade war with China escalated significantly, as Biden continued the bellicose policies towards Iran and Cuba. Most importantly, Biden expanded the scope and degree of industrial planning carried out by the American state, bringing to an end decades of market-oriented industrial policy.

Bidenism will be remembered as a political interregnum, a period of political consolidation between the two Trumpist revolutions.

The Democratic Party

Who are the Democrats? First of all, they are the party of the Haute Bourgeois, of high finance, of the transnational corporations. Overwhelmingly, the largest bloc of capitalists supports the Democrats, along with the various institutions of the state: the civil service, civil society, Harvard and Yale, the military bureaucracy, the intelligence services. This class is represented in politics by the Yankees, the multilateralists, the liberal internationalists; they are the party of the United Nations, NATO, and free trade. In short, they are the Party of Order.

However, like all bourgeois parties, the Democratic Party is a coalition of broad class forces that are cohered together in order to win elections. Nowhere is this more true than in America, where the party-state is so institutionalised as to make serious political fragmentation functionally impossible. The Democratic Party is a coalition of the urban middle classes, of professionals, managers, and petty-capitalists, intellectuals and public servants, with organised labour, represented by the social-imperialist AFL-CIO, and the politicised layers of black and migrant working class.

This coalition is not a stable one. The Democrats rely on mobilising its working class base in order to win elections, however, it must ultimately govern in the interests of its ruling class benefactors. This creates a particular political dynamic which has been widely commented upon by the socialist movement. The bourgeois liberals and republicans are quick to mobilise the spectre of reaction in order to mobilise their base, whipping them up with fears of an imminent clerical-reactionary take-over of the state apparatus. However, in practice, the Democrats are not interested in mounting a "resistance to fascism" - they are a party of the bourgeoisie and will ultimately seek the unity of the bourgeois state over any popular front of all classes. Inside the Democrats, the most advanced sections of the American workers are strangled.

The Democratic Vote Collapses

The reasons given for the collapse of the Democratic vote are multitude. Were the democrats too woke? Was it young men, or black men, or hispanic voters, who turned the tide? Were they insufficiently supportive of Israel's racial holy war in Gaza?

All of these answers are transparently an attempt to elide the real cause of the Democratic Party's defeat. The reality is simple. The Democratic Party offers nothing

Kamala Harris campaigns with Liz Cheney | PHOTO: AP

to its multiracial working class base, and in turn they did not vote. Voter turnout has fallen significantly since the 2020 election, and the Democrats were unable to rally the popular front they constantly attempt to summon. The Democratic Party is led by a liberal political caste that is wholly out of touch with reality, and unable to produce a politics with mass appeal. Every celebrity endorsement and hand-shake with Liz Cheney widened this gyre. And so the House of Biden, and the dream of a Harris presidency, died.

The Republican Party

Enter the Victors. The Republican Party that has taken power is also a coalition. This is the party of extractive capital, of mining and logging, of the rancher capitalists and farmers, of agricultural producers, and of small and medium capitalists in the countryside. If the Democratic Party is the party of the universities, then the Republicans are the party of the country clubs and the chambers of commerce. Importantly, this election saw the defection of a bloc of financial-technology capital to the Trump campaign. The Republicans are the party of the frontier, of the Cowboys, of Manifest Destiny.

Behind them, they draw up the entire middle strata of the American regions. The local elites of the towns, the Evangelical Churches and traditionalist Catholics, petty producers and independent contractors, all the varied layers that stand against the proletariat and gather them up behind a reactionary political program. In turn, layers of the American working class, in particular white, non-unionised workers, have long supported the Republican Party.

From the perspective of the Democratic Party, this coalition seems to be a stable, unshakeable bloc in American political life. And certainly, it is more disciplined than the Democratic base. However, the Republican coalition is just as fractious and filled with its own internal factions. Christian theocrats, ethnic nationalists, Barstool-Sports libertarians, and Silicon Valley anarchists are not natural allies. What draws them together is a common sense of grievance - a sense that their position as the rightful rulers of the social order is being denied by liberal political domination over the state apparatus.

Fascism, Reaction, and Bonapartism

Is Trump a fascist?

Fascism is not a catch-all term for reactionary, undemocratic political formations. Nor is it a synonym for racist nationalism. Fascism is a counter-revolutionary political movement of

the petit-bourgeois and declassed social strata that seeks national rejuvenation through a corporatist mobilisation state. Fascism is a militarised movement directed at the power of the working class and its democratic organisations, often utilising paramilitary squads in the streets. It is counter-revolutionary in this sense (and from the standpoint of social development). However, it is also revolutionary in the sense that it seeks to overturn the existing liberal order and undertake a nationalist revolution.

While the MAGA Movement absolutely has a fascist element (JD Vance may actually be a fascist in the European corporatist mode), the majority of this coalition are not fascist, nor are there mass fascist organisations in the United States. The character of the Trump regime will not be fascist, but Bonapartist - a political movement that seizes power and seeks to co-opt a broad coalition of radicals and reactionaries, ruling against the existing state elite in the service of a faction of the ruling class. It is through this analytical rubric that much of Trump's activities make sense - his appointment of neoconservatives and paleoconservatives, libertarians and labour conservatives side by side. These are all the disparate factions of American reaction, welded into the political office behind the charismatic figure of Trump.

In this sense, the movement that Trumpism is most comparable to is Boulangism - the populist-revanchist movement around French General Boulanger in the latter part of the 19th Century. This movement brought together radicalised social strata and forged an inchoate coalition around "General Revenge" and the demand for war with Germany. In doing so, Boulanger promoted a schizophrenic politics of reactionary socialism - attacking political elites and exploitation, while stirring up nationalist sentiment. However, the movement was not able to forge itself into a political party, and died with the general.

The Petit-Bourgeois Revolutionaries

The program of Trumpism in power is more radical now than it was eight years ago. Trump's base, and his coalition, has radicalised, and the traditional bourgeois leadership of the Republican party has either been jettisoned or bent the knee. Gone are the days of free trade republicans: Trump promises radical economic nationalism, a brutal tariff regime that is guaranteed to drive inflation, and a recession-inducing wave of austerity in the Federal government. The aim, if one sees behind the bluster, is to unleash a storm of inflation and unemployment that would see workers wages be reduced to poverty levels. It is only on the basis of such a dire assault that domestic manufacturing and small-capitalist profitability be restored. This will no doubt provoke a furious response in one form or another. But with the American working class disorganised, there is no clear road to smash the Trumpist program.

Such a revolutionary program is also going to shatter the Trumpist base. The small and medium capitalists are certainly fervent in their support of economic nationalism and attacks on the wage rate. But inflation will also decrease their savings, devalue their assets, and tighten their ability to consume the luxuries they so covert. This layer may soon find itself high and dry as the economic shocks shake the nation.

They Rally Round the Family

Another pillar of the Trumpist coalition is a defence of the family in a period where it is increasingly challenged by the development of capitalist civilisation. With birth rates falling, America is reliant on immigration to sustain the population growth the capitalist accumulation demands. However, mass immigration destabilises the ethnic coalitions that guarantee the power of local elites, especially outside of the big cities. The only alternative to immigration is to re-invigorate the family unit, which functionally means throwing women into domestic servitude. Attacks on abortion, attacks on gay rights, the demands to censor pornography and crack down on "sexual degeneracy" - all of these calls act to defend the family, which is in fact the nucleus of private property.

We should not underestimate the popularity of patriarchal ideology, especially amongst the young. Reactionary patriarchal politics plays on the oedipal structure of the family unit, and it stirs up great feelings of resentment and disappointment. Importantly, in response to the counter-revolutionary wave in the realm of sexual politics, the communist movement

must forge its own path that both acknowledges the problems of the existing bourgeois hegemony, while not indulging in the reactionary oedipal fantasies of the right.

With a Pocket Full of Shells

There is a misapprehension, even by some socialists, that Trump and his coalition are opposed to war and military adventures abroad. Even more absurd is the claim that Trump is some kind of anti-imperialist. Trump's initial cabinet is a war cabinet. Staffed with anti-Iran hawks, militarists, and China cold warriors. Whatever isolationist rhetoric Trump might pander to, he is not opposed to the fundamental dynamics of the American empire, or even to military intervention. What Trump is seeking is a renegotiation of the terms under which the empire is organised.

The view that the small and medium capitalists are less imperialist than their haute bourgeois cousins is erroneous in the extreme. Nicolas D Villarreal outlines this fact masterfully in his essay, To Hell with the American Gentry:

The problem of allocating surplus with limited economic growth is one that has had a time-honored, consistent solution for those societies that are unable to give up the bloated excesses of their ruling classes: imperialism. It should be noted that Trump's insistence on withdrawing the US military across the world wasn't so much about non-intervention as securing better terms of payment for US support, to turn the US empire once again into a profit-making enterprise. Due to strategic nuclear arsenals, it is no longer possible to conduct the kind of wars that would vastly reduce foreign capital and competition to rubble, therefore saving profit rates from their inexorable decline. However, more extensive exploitation of natural resources and labor in Latin America and Africa is possible. The continued rise of petty-bourgeois power entails a movement away from the global trade system supported by the American military, and instead towards the old way of exclusive spheres of influence.

Because of this necessity of imperialism to support such an "aristocracy", this paradise for the gentry will still entail massive financial monopolies, only ones that are pointed outward rather than inward. This is necessary to impose the vast rents on the countries within the empire's sphere of influence, to gorge on ever more labor time and resources. A never-ending primitive accumulation is the sublime American dream they so desire. A stillborn world, one where capitalism's explicit social relations are suspended in time and the real logic of capital suppressed so as to prevent any threat to those same relations.

Where is the Working Class?

The workers who did not vote, certainly did not move over to Trump's camp. They largely did not participate. Here we should remember the words of Mike Davis in Prisoners of the American Dream:

In no other capitalist country is mass political abstentionism as fully developed as in the United States, where a 'silent majority' of the working class has sat out more than half the elections of the last century. Arguably, this mute, atomized protest is the historical correlative of the striking absence of an independent political party of the proletariat in the country that once invented both the labor party and May Day.

This political disillusionment and disorganisation of the American working class is primarily the product of a decades-long marriage between organised labour and the Democratic Party. A marriage which has brought the American working class to ruin.

It would be a mistake to tail any kind of Democratic party led "resistance" to the Trump administration. This would simply be another popular front, another opportunity to draw the workers movement into the defence of liberal capitalism. Instead, communists must look to the politically disorganised and disengaged American working class, both native and immigrant, and seek to organise a broad struggle against racism, against patriarchy, and for workers power. Vitally, the American working class needs a party of their own, a socialist labour party that can lead the working class to political power. Only with the triumph of the American working class, and the creation of a new republic, can Trump and the world that created him be relegated to the dustbin of history.

Trump gives his acceptance speech following his victory in the 2024 US General Election | PHOTO: NDTV

Republicans win the 2024 US Election - The global counter-revolutionary wave

Maxine E

In the USA's 2024 Presidential and Congressional elections, the Republican party has won a complete victory. Controlling both houses of congress, the presidency, and the Supreme Court, Trump has obtained essentially dictatorial power over America.

He will increase tariffs to escalate the trade war with China, bringing about a recession and a rise in inflation so dramatic that it will kill many working-class Americans. He will enact federal bans on abortion and transgender hormone-replacement therapy that will kill many women and Queer Americans.

In a repeat of 2016, the progressive activists that placed their trust in the Democratic Party are leaving. They have re-discovered the Democrats' abject failure to resist the far-right on the electoral stage.

What happens in America spreads to Australia. Many left-liberal progressives and previously inactive socialists are looking for a new movement and many will join the ranks of organised communists like us. Meanwhile, in a mirror to Trump's victory, the Liberal National Party have won the Queensland state election and may vote for anti-abortion legislation brought forward by Katter's Australia Party.

Why did the Republicans win the election? What lessons have we learned since the failures of 2016 to now? What must the organised communist left do with our new comrades? How can we resist the rise of the far-right in Australia?

The Class Basis of the Republicans and Democrats

Polling data from the 2016 US federal election and onwards gives us a clear picture of the class makeup of the two American political parties.

The Democrats are an unstable coalition of the poorest American workers, college-educated middle-class renters, and the urban ultra-wealthy. While both the Republicans and the Democrats are capitalist parties, the Democrats are the preferred home of publicly traded companies i.e. international finance corporations. The ultra-wealthy individuals

that run these firms are the dominant faction in this coalition.

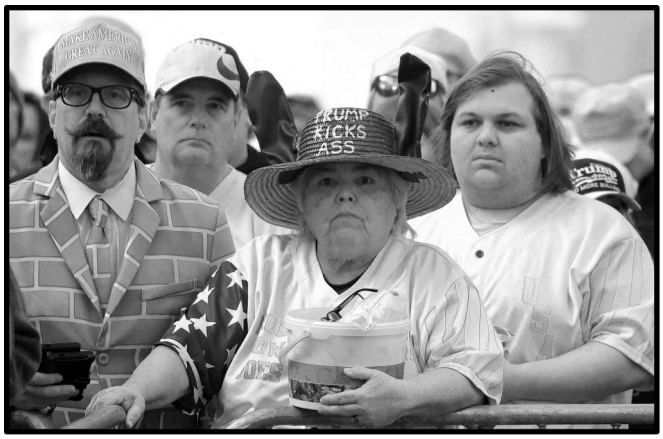
These class allies of convenience are unhappy bedfellows. Through their control of the Democratic party, the financial wing of capitalism chooses politicians and policies that serve their interests: anti-union legislation, budget austerity, maintaining and expanding US imperialism, supporting Israel, pursuing war in the Middle East, and antagonising China.

Where does this leave the other arms of the Democratic party? The capitalists in charge of the party are more opposed to reform supporting the working class than they are to the Republicans. Because of this, they refuse to allow the working-class base of the party to push for reforms that would alleviate inflation and poverty. This unresolvable conflict between the working class and ruling class elements of the Democratic coalition leaves the party in a trap that it is unwilling to escape.

This manifested itself in this year's election. Disappointed by the Biden administration's failure to address poverty and inflation, and Harris' refusal to publicly break with Biden's policies, working class voters simply did not turn out to vote Democrat. Celebrity endorsements and massive spending on election advertisements were not enough to turn out working voters. While Trump won roughly the same number of votes as in 2020, the Democrats lost some 14 million.

This is how the Democrats lost the election. The Republican swing voter is a myth. The fantasy of the anti-Trump conservative appealed to the sensibilities of the ultra-wealthy that run the Democrats. After the failure to make good on Obama's promises of healthcare reform, and the failure to make good on Biden's policies of policing and gun reform, no working-class voter trusts the Democrats anymore. Come election time, they stay at home. By pursuing policies they knew their working-class base doesn't care about, the Democrats effectively lost the election on purpose. Guilting your base into voting for you, while promising them nothing, is not a winning strategy.

The Republicans, on the other hand, are a coalition of family-owned business, middle-class homeowners, and young men. These family-owned businesses tend to be smaller than the finance corporations behind the



Voters at a Trump Rally in 2024 | PHOTO: Reuters

Democrats, they are involved in the agricultural and energy sectors, and do not publicly sell their shares.

While these capitalists are just as interested in anti-worker, pro-austerity, and pro-imperialist policy as the Democrats, they are much more concerned with the state of domestic industry. Whereas American finance enjoys the freedom to move wherever on the planet it can make the greatest return on investment, this is not the case for American industrial firms. From this inflexibility emerges their obsession with using massive tariffs to re-industrialise America.

This is almost identical to the class makeup of the 20th century European fascist parties. But why do homeowners and young men support them? How and why are the Republicans different from those fascist parties? What motivates them?

The Delayed Counter Revolution

During the 1980s, the Neoliberal vanguard parties successfully smashed the male breadwinner wage. Simultaneously, the liberation movements of women, Queer people, and racial minorities won enormous concessions. Queer people won relative freedom of expression and recognition, and racial minorities ended formal segregation and obtained equal legal status.

Women in particular made enormous leaps forward. By pushing for equal opportunities to work, women entered the workforce en masse and obtained economic independence from men. Despite the continued existence of the gender pay gap, women no longer require a husband just to make enough money to

Pro-abortion rally in the lead up to US election | PHOTO: AFP

survive. Families can no longer rely just on the wage of husbands and fathers, but also require wives and mothers to make contributions. Women are now expected, and thus allowed, to work for a wage while also being mothers and carers.

No longer forced to get a husband as quickly as possible, women have obtained relative sexual freedom. Many young men, frustrated with the loss of the economic privilege that guaranteed their fathers the sexual and household servitude of women, have gone over to the far-right. The misogynist's sexual frustration manifests, as it always has, in Queerphobia.

The classes that make up the Republican coalition have the most to lose from this revolution due to their material interests. Capitalists profit off women's unpaid household labour by outsourcing the cost of keeping workers fed and healthy. Domestic American businesses thrive on racialised and feminised low wages. Family-owned businesses are obsessed with producing male heirs to share their property with. Industrial firms are constantly hungry for workers and therefore are concerned with low birthrates. Male workers benefit from a system which entitles them to the sexual services and household labour of their female peers in marriage. The sexual revolution poses a threat to all these interests.

While the fascists of the 20th century targeted the organised socialist workers movements, the target of the 21st century reactionary movement is women, Queer people, and racial minorities. It has not come about by random chance. It is the expression of a concrete structural link between male domination of women in the family and capitalist exploitation of workers in the workplace.

This is not to say that patriarchy and class are two distinct systems. Each is premised on the existence of the other. Capitalism could not function without patriarchy to reproduce itself. Patriarchy has only ever existed in relation to a class system that organises production and property. It does not make sense to imagine one without the other, or one more fundamental than the other. The logic of capitalist accumulation is also the logic of patriarchal reproduction.

But there is a contradiction between the patriarchy, which aims to keep women out of the workforce, and capitalism, which wants to maximise work, profits, and growth. The sexual revolution sharpened this contradiction. By refusing to limit themselves to making new workers, women are starving capitalists of fresh labour. By demanding that the state and businesses share the burden of care labour, the sexual revolution attacked profit margins. By demanding access to work, abortion rights, and sexual liberty, women have shortened the divide within the working class between men and women, reaching for concrete unity with male workers.

The election of Trump is concerningly mirrored by brother movements of reactionary misogyny in Europe and East Asia. This is a global counter-revolution against the sexual and racial revolution that has taken place over forty years. It has gained more success in America than Australia due to the worse economic position of these classes in the US, where the ultra-wealthy financial elite has total economic power, stoking reactionary sentiment. But the result of the Queensland state election demonstrates that we are not immune to this reactionary turn.

Next Steps - The Need for Political Education

With the need to defend against this counter-revolution made clear, it is obvious that communists must expand the liberation struggle. But what are the next steps?

2016 onwards proved that many who leave the Democrats in disgust, and join the radical

Congresswooman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez campaigns with Kamala Harris | PHOTO: Middle East Eye

activist or communist left, will simply be re-absorbed into the NGOs and co-opted back into the electoralist progressive parties. But these parties, by upholding the capitalist system, do not address the structural forces behind the counter-revolutionary movement! They leave the cause of the issue unaddressed. They are helpless to stop it.

Similarly, the women's liberation struggle was limited where it did not acknowledge the fundamental structure of class. Yet, socialists were unable to completely win over these movements because their political theory underplayed the structure role of patriarchy.

What the left has lacked is consistent and meaningful political education. Uneducated in revolutionary praxis, the progressive revolter was easily swallowed up again by the reformists. Deployed, like employees, into direct action and mutual aid networks by dogmatic sects, organiser burnout was inevitable. We need to move beyond the Instagram education of the intersectional left, who shy away from class politics. We need to move beyond the dogmatic employee education of the sectarian socialists, who too often underplay the material basis of patriarchy and imperialism.

But we have also learned that radical politics alone are not enough. Over the next four years, the Democrats in opposition will simultaneously trend further right in policy terms and blame left-leaning working-class voters for not turning out. As in 2016, there will be greater calls for unity against the alt-right. But the absolute failure of the Democrats to electorally challenge the Republicans demonstrates that electoral coalitions between the working class and the ruling class are dead ends. We give them our votes, and they give us nothing in return. They won't campaign on pro-working-class reform, and they can't win elections, so we must cut ourselves adrift from them.

We need to focus on giving people a proper political education, one that teaches independent-thinking and dedication to the revolution, one that raises awareness that patriarchy is a structural force. We need working class institutions that are independent of the capitalists. We need revolutionary politics that address the structural cause of the sexual counter revolution. These are the first steps to fighting the counter-revolution and re-igniting the struggle for universal human liberation.

The Capitalist law of conservation of gendered oppression - why queer, Internationalist, Proletarian feminism is still revolutionary in 2024

Cassie Barnes

[Note: this piece previously appeared in Direct Action, and was originally written in early April 2022, at something of a high water mark of liberal feminism. Within a week of it being written, the Dobbs decision in the US came down and began a new era of reactionary incursions against women's ability to participate freely in society. In light of recent threats to abortion access in Queensland and South Australia, and the victory of Trump in the US election, this article is being republished to explain the political economy of culture war.]

A common position among leftists of the 60s-80s was that Women's Liberation and Queer Liberation struggles are revolutionary struggles against capitalism. The argument went that capitalism needs to constantly reproduce itself on an extended scale, including an ever-expanding workforce, and it does this by pairing every adult male worker with a housewife, bonded to the home by domestic labour with very limited reproductive choices. If women were able to refuse marriage, motherhood and heterosexuality, they would do so en masse and cause a terminal crisis in social reproduction. This made struggles against gender oppression not just a moral necessity but an act of revolutionary sabotage. If capitalism cannot exist without gendered oppression, resistance to gendered oppression becomes a fulcrum by which capital can be toppled.

This line of argument has largely fallen out of favour: quietly shuffled into the background, dropped entirely by most 21st century leftists, or simply treated as a faintly embarrassing artefact of a more optimistic time. Any worthwhile leftist will (correctly) insist that queer and women's liberation have yet to be won and cannot be completed while capital still lives. Still, the conventional wisdom is that these struggles are long-since exhausted as a means of making inroads against capital. The predictions of their efficacy were refuted by history: the Second Wave facilitated a jailbreak from domestic servitude, motherhood, and housewifery, yet the terminal crisis never came. With every generation since more women walk away; birth rates have now fallen below replacement. How then, does capitalism seem stronger than ever?

These causes have a moral weight that fully justifies them as sites of struggle in themselves but capitalism has completely metabolised these movements' demands and used them to manufacture consent for itself all the more effectively. Girlboss-inflected rainbow capitalism is everywhere. International corporations scramble over each other to show how many women are on their board or to superimpose the pride flag on their logos in June. These gestures are cynical but ultimately a reflection of the fact that queer and feminist politics have largely become hegemonic - a bittersweet success tainted by the realisation that these politics were never as revolutionary as was once hoped.

Or so the narrative goes.

This narrative is blinkered in the extreme and fails to look beyond the imperial core and semiperiphery. It is a narrative based on an idealist conception of sexual politics disconnected from the interests that drive it. The case for liberation from gendered oppression, applied as a universal demand across borders, has never been more self-evidently revolutionary.

A Theory of Reproductive Imperialism

For decades now, the nations of the imperial core have been in the midst of a demographic collapse. Birth rates have fallen near-universally below the replacement rate. People are waiting longer and longer to have kids and when they do have kids they have fewer - to say nothing of those refusing all together. The Second Wave of Feminism, while badly incomplete and defeated on many

A feminist rally during the second-wave era | PHOTO: Unknown

of its more radical demands, successfully dismantled many of the instruments through which women have been coerced into unpaid reproductive labour. A woman with access to contraception, abortion on demand, no-fault divorce and a viable career is one who can refuse marriage and child-rearing. Given the option, many women have chosen to do just that. Adding to this, the increased normalisation of queer identities has further reduced the number of people who are willing to submit to uncompensated reproductive labour, both by intensifying scrutiny on gendered assumptions about what women are supposed to do and by expanding the proportion of relationships in which accidental conceptions are impossible.

A huge amount of the psychosexual madness of modern politics can be put down to the mass realisation by women that they do not need to submit themselves to a man in order to be happy. For a certain class of mediocre men who have been conditioned to expect a wife, the discovery that no woman will tolerate them without the threats of poverty, social ostracism and spinsterhood has driven them insane.

The flow of women into the workforce and the reduction in the number of children per household has massively boosted the absolute and relative rates of surplus value in the imperial core. As Marxists we know that wages are determined by the average cost of reproducing a worker at a certain standard of living, determined by historical factors and class struggle. When the social norm was for single breadwinner households with many children, full-time wages were set to cover the cost of supporting two adults and several children. When the norm became almost all adults working full-time jobs with a below-replacement birth rate, full-time wages fell to the cost of supporting one adult and a fractional child.

As women increasingly refused the reproductive labour required to maintain society, a rift opened up. Unpaid labour-hours are the raw material of profit and profit must grow endlessly for capital to live; the next generation of workers being smaller than the last is an existential threat to capital. However, international capital has found a means to work around this problem.

In recent decades, the insufficient replenishment of native-born workers has been supplemented by a flow of workers migrating from the periphery. These have largely been split into two groups: manual labourers to do agricultural and app-based gig work and highly skilled professionals to fill the ranks of doctors, lawyers, engineers, and other highly-educated roles.

The benefit of such migration to the imperial core is obvious: these are workers who arrive ready-made with all the costs of their upbringing and education already paid, and by the nature of the risks and challenges involved they are self-selected to be more ambitious and disciplined than the average worker. Their precarious legal status (and nativist rhetoric about the suspicious Other) means they can be subjected to intensities of labour discipline that native workers would refuse. Furthermore, they are usually without savings or legal entitlement to welfare benefits that might give them the ability to refuse poor working conditions. Some portion of them who clear every hurdle can be granted citizenship and all that entails, while the rest can be deported back as soon as they cease to be useful.

So far, so familiar. This is a well-documented phenomenon by which rates of relative and absolute surplus have been maintained in the core. However, western leftists' analysis often stops there and fails to consider the implications: the states of the periphery also require a constantly growing workforce for all the same reasons listed above. Yet, due to the aforementioned migration, they are also compelled to bear a significant portion of the reproductive costs of the imperial core. Under the intense conditions of interstate

Collecting water in Ethipoia |PHOTO: Concern USA

competition to lower taxes and labour standards, combined with the low rates of profit per worker characteristic of labour-intensive industries, such states have very little ability to subsidise social reproduction in the ways the states of the core and semiperiphery do. The imperial core and semiperiphery may directly subsidise through welfare tax breaks and public schooling, or indirectly through mandated maternity/paternity leave - the periphery cannot.

The survival of the social order requires enormous volumes of reproductive work to be done, but neither capital nor the state will pay for it. The only solution available is that women must be forced to bear the costs of raising large numbers of children, uncompensated. This is only possible by the complete destruction of whatever reproductive rights they may previously have had, along with the destruction of their civil rights, and public campaigns of terror against those who are perceived to have shirked these duties by abortion, birth control, homosexuality, or other deviances.

This analysis demystifies the broad failure of queer and feminist campaigns to secure even minimal liberal demands in much of the global south (and the rise of fascist and theocratic movements rolling any successes back) without idealist - and racist - condescension about the mental and cultural backwardness of the populations. Sexual counterrevolution in the periphery happens because of, not despite, the relative freedoms in the core.

Under capitalism, every queer childless polycule in the core is subsidised by the coerced servitude of a tradwife in the periphery.

Seen in this light, the rainbow capitalism of the imperial core takes on a distinctly more sinister tone - rather than a token acknowledgement of hard-won rights, it becomes a victory lap of international capital, having recuperated yet another liberation struggle into a vector of intensified exploitation.

But if international capital has taken the side of women and queers against patriarchy within the core, why are the patriarchs still able to put up a fight and even roll back hard-won freedoms? What (other than an organised, militant proletariat) could possibly stand at war with international capital?

Culture wars as Intra-Capitalist Conflict

Within the countries of the imperial core where class consciousness is at an historically low ebb, electoral politics represents little more than a dramatisation of power struggles between different sectors of capital. Typically, the more "conservative" party represents the interests of small business and the more rural, geographically-fixed, extractive forms of large capital (e.g. agribusiness, mining, forestry, etc.) and the more "progressive" party represents the interests of large international capital (finance, tech, etc) as well as the sections of capital more directly dependant on local ecologies (e.g. tourism). This can explain most of the spectacle of electoral politics quite neatly - fights over environmental policy, education, infrastructure, and the like are little more than contests for power where the sectional interests of capital are at odds. Yet at first glance it seems to totally fail to explain culture war as a phenomenon.

It's not immediately obvious why sections of capital would concern themselves with defending racist statues in public squares, limiting reproductive options, or passing laws to persecute trans people. The easiest response is that it's a distraction - a vast, pointless spectacle of cruelty against the marginalised, in which the energy of politically engaged people invested in liberatory politics can be harmlessly discharged far from the issues that capital actually cares about. All the while providing a legitimising illusion of democratic efficacy. While there is an element of truth here, it's an inadequate view that cannot explain the specifics and intensity of culture war politics.

Examples from North America spring to mind: people whipped up into a fury by the supposedly epiphenomenal spectacle have orchestrated widespread boycotts of major corporations and entire states, intentionally intensified and extended a devastating pandemic, performed quixotic attempts at insurrection, and successfully pulled off extended blockages of vital commercial arteries which further exacerbated an extant global logistical crisis. All of this for no apparent end beyond spite. When these activities directly and significantly impede the activities of capital as they increasingly do, we need a structural explanation that not only explains the cause of culture war, but also why it is tolerated.

If the expansion of bourgeois rights to women and queer people in the core has been such a boon to capital, why would there be such a concerted, well-funded campaign to roll it back? As I write this, there is an orgiastic carnival of cruelty sweeping the state governments of the US attempting to repeal every gain made by women and queer people in the last 60 years, including ones that seemed settled (like the legality of same-sex marriage and the prohibition on adults marrying children).

These fights are manifestations of power struggles between the interests of large international capitals and small local capitals, interests which significantly contradict each other in the realm of social reproduction.

As stated above, international capital has found the partial dissolution of traditional patriarchal structures in core and semi-core countries to be convenient - it has created a higher rate of labour force participation and reduced wages per worker. International (read also: highly financialised) capital's power is exerted primarily through the market: they will lobby for changes in law that benefit them, but it's typically through legislation that will further streamline and lubricate their cycle of M-C-M'. They need no other source of authority than their purchasing power (which gives them vast capacity to command labour and resources) and their low per-unit costs of producing demanded commodities. International capital is a purer, more mature form of capital, functioning on its own terms for its own purposes and answerable to no human need. As its power is exerted primarily through the market, it is in its interest to see the dissolution of all other power structures and the expansion of market logic into every aspect of life. This international capital is the motive force behind neoliberalism and all that entails.

Small and geographically fixed capital is instantiated within a more mixed ecosystem of power in which capital cannot operate independent of the person of the capitalist. The power of the capitalist in this world is not primarily exercised through his ownership of

capital, but through a symbiotic web of parochial institutions of ideological and repressive power. His (almost always his) status as local entrepreneur is intertwined with his roles as member of an influential local family, as respected churchgoer granted the podium to channel god for his own purposes, as political figure elected to decision-making positions within the community, as a nexus of contacts who always knows a guy. These forms of power are not only essential to shaping political decisions in ways that aid him in accumulation, but grant the status of a trusted authority who can stretch the tolerance of workers, residents and governments well beyond what is possible for impersonal international capital. Here he can convince workers that they are family and they should sacrifice in his interest, he is the most trusted voice in every dispute, he can bend the ear of a family of abused employees, of law enforcement, of the judiciary, of local governments to make excuses and exceptions and understandings in his favour and always come off as the magnanimous pillar of the community. This is the power of the highest tier of the local petty bourgeoisie: the so-called "Gentry".

Fundamentally, property has a different meaning to the Gentry and other petty bourgeois than it does to the haute bourgeoisie - for the haute bourgeoisie property exists purely as capital, the means for accumulation. Its role is to act as an income stream and that income can purchase whatever goods or status one wishes. For the petty bourgeoisie, property is power and authority - it is the space in which you can act as absolute dictator and it is your status within your community. The exercise of this discretionary power necessarily requires deviations from the optimal choice of accumulation but this is worthwhile in pursuit of a larger set of personal goals. This is, for example, why anti-discrimination laws are such a point of friction - they restrict the power of the petty bourgeois over their domain by binding them to the logic of the profit-maximising agent that finance capital wishes everyone to be.

This power-ecology in which the Gentry thrive is structured by specific sets of social institutions and customs, constantly

An anti-abortion rally in the US | PHOTO: NYT

threatened by the logic of financial capital in its drive to mediate every interaction through market logic and dissolve all that is solid into air. In response, the Gentry fight a constant defensive war to preserve the networks in which their power is instantiated.

The Gentry typically requires the overwhelming majority of social reproduction in their domain to be done locally within the institutions they control. This requires strong patriarchal authority enforced consistently on many fronts to foreclose life choices that don't include a nuclear family with at least 3 kids. There must be constant and ongoing social, legal, economic and logistical friction to make abortion, contraception, divorce, and queerness anywhere between difficult and unthinkable, as all of these undermine social reproduction.

Their authority also requires that travel in and out be limited and controlled by these non-market institutions of social life. It would be disastrous if any more than a small proportion of young adults leave for the city, as this would mean the Gentry losing out on the benefits of the labour power of workers whose reproduction costs have already been borne locally. It is important that those who leave do not undermine the legitimacy of the local social order: in every case the situation must either be framed as Local Boy Made Good in the Big City, or a sinner cast out from Eden. The former re-enforces the local order ideologically by affirming the superiority of people who grow up with their values, and economically through the pressure to bring their money back into the community via remittances or returning later in life (so long

as they don't bring back too many of the wrong ideas). The latter re-enforces the social order by intensifying the terror of corrupting outside influences and justifies more intensive crackdowns on any deviation or rebellion against these institutions.

Another survival mechanism by the Gentry is ensuring that people who enter the community from outside are required to say certain shibboleths, pledge loyalty to certain institutions, and demonstrate that they are no threat to the ideological status quo.

At their core, the Gentry requires hostility to attempted entrances by corporate capital, primarily by appealing to the idea that they will undermine these beloved "community values", that they are impersonal and cruel, and above all that they are a trojan horse for socially progressive politics. When performative anti-corporate furies are whipped up over a company turning their logo rainbow-coloured in June or making some statement about racial injustice, this is almost always the driving motive behind it. If you believe corporate capital is an infiltrator trying to make your kids trans, you'll boycott them in favour of the local small business who otherwise couldn't compete.

Against "Polycules in One Country"

As is so common for liberation struggles under capitalism, women's and queer liberation is a revolution only half-done. Its victories are real, worth defending and currently under threat. That said, we must not be blind to the reality that in defending basic bourgeois rights of women and queer people in the imperial core (and in acting to make them a reality in areas of the imperial core where they are suppressed by the hegemony of the Gentry) we are necessarily having the secondary effect of acting as insurgents for international finance capital against the bastions of small capital.

We should have no sympathy for the small capitalist, appeals to the moral superiority of the small local capitalist to the faceless corporate monolith have always been the romantic fantasies of sycophants. The petty bourgeoisie has historically always been the social base of fascism and it is playing out that role prodigiously in this current wave of reaction, their proletarianisation is an unambiguous good. Large monopoly capital has historically been easier to unionise against, easier to fight and squeeze concessions from, and ultimately is likely to be easier to expropriate and repurpose for a planned economy beyond the value form.

Nonetheless, having J. P. Morgan as a fellow traveller is grounds for some serious soul-searching, and every conscience should be troubled by the thought that one's own sexual freedom is bought with the intensified sexual servitude of others. This brings us back to our original question: are women's and queer liberation struggles revolutionary in the 21st century?

From the above analysis I think the answer is definitive yes, but only when applied to the imperial periphery. Winning the practical freedom to refuse social reproductive labour at every level without fear of violence or penalty (legal, economic or social) across the majority of the globe would go beyond its manifest liberatory content and induce a rupture in capitalism as an international system. This redoubles the importance of these demands as not just liberatory but revolutionary.

The means by which such a victory could be achieved are beyond the scope of this essay, but a few comments on this are in order. Such struggles must take seriously the differing cultural, historical and economic contours of gendered oppression in different populations and be vigilant against the tendency to simply universalise the experience and assumptions of western feminism. International solidarity in these struggles and tight coordination of strategy across borders in pursuit of these interests must be features of any serious revolutionary movement against capitalism, and organising women against reproductive labour is among the prime tasks of any communist party in the global periphery.

The struggle against gendered oppression is of immense importance, so immense that to say it is the project to liberate billions from lives of reproductive servitude is an understatement. The global victory of women and queer people over our oppressors is the victory of all humanity over the abstractions which enslave us and a precondition for humankind to finally take conscious control of its own destiny.

Socialist Alternative march at a pro-Palestinian rally | PHOTO: Red Flag

SAlt derangement syndrome and the people who have it

Max J

It would be difficult to list all the people out there who don't like Socialist Alternative (SAlt; the Australian post-Cliffite organisation, not related to the US or UK Socialist Alternative/International Socialist Alternative). While there are many valid reasons to disagree with Socialist Alternative, there are many more invalid and unserious reasons to throw scorn on Australia's largest Marxist organisation. Many people fall in the latter camp.

SAlt has been a target of left-liberals in Australia for decades, but more recently it seems that these attacks have been increasing. In the last 12 months alone, there have been numerous accounts popping up claiming to be "ex-SAlt members", "in communication with ex-SAlt" members etc, all claiming to be "outing" SAlt as a cult.

The first of these accounts was one under the name of "Rakey Healing" (now defunct?). Rakey's focus was highlighting stories from alleged ex-SAlt members which painted a stark image of the group. Charges against SAlt from Rakey Healing and others range from "cult-like behaviour", "transphobia/racism", "co-opting protests" and "financial abuse".

What is the point of all this? It seems that this is a red baiting campaign to shut down a socialist group, on fairly flimsy grounds. Is SAlt guilty of any of the things these people accuse them of, and how much of it is actually bad?

The Charges

First, "co-opting". This C word is the favoured C word of 'the swamp' (disorganised left-liberals, radical-liberals, etc), unlike other C words. In their minds, the presence of any open political organisation at a rally (except for the Greens!) means that the organisation in question is trying to "take over" the rally. While SAlt tends to form their own blocs at protests and rallies, this is hardly "co-optation'. For starters, while rally organisers have a responsibility to ensure the rally is safe, they do not 'own' the rallies or protests they organise. It is strange, and patently anti-democratic, to try and grant them the power to disallow random groups from attending openly purely on the basis that they attend openly. Left-liberal charges of perfidious Marxists "co-opting" things rings hollow when they allow the Greens, a capitalist electoral party, to openly and brazenly co-opt anything climate related.

Charges of 'financial abuse' are also strange. While SAlt isn't fully open about their dues rates, having exorbitant membership fees (which SAlt may or may not have) does not constitute 'financial abuse'.

Is SAlt racist? No. Only very rarely are Socialist groups of these kinds overtly and maliciously racist. Most charges of racism against SAlt come from predominantly white left-liberals following behind Keiran Stewart-Assheton of the Black People's Union (BPU). While SAlt has a majority white membership (one can assume), this is not unique to SAlt, as most other groups on the Socialist left in Australia also have a majority white membership. This boils down less to the racism of these groups (whether they're actually racist or not is a different question) and more to demographics. That being said, there is much these groups can do to attract a more racially diverse membership. But identitarianism (i.e BPU) isn't the solution.

A serious analysis of the 'critiques' levied against SAlt by these people can only come to one conclusion: that they aren't really making actual criticisms of SAlt or SAlt's tactics/strategy. For example, Exposing SAlt at UQ (@socialistalternative_uq) claims that SAlt exerts "media control". How exactly does SAlt exert "media control"? Through their members arguing with people in Instagram comments sections.

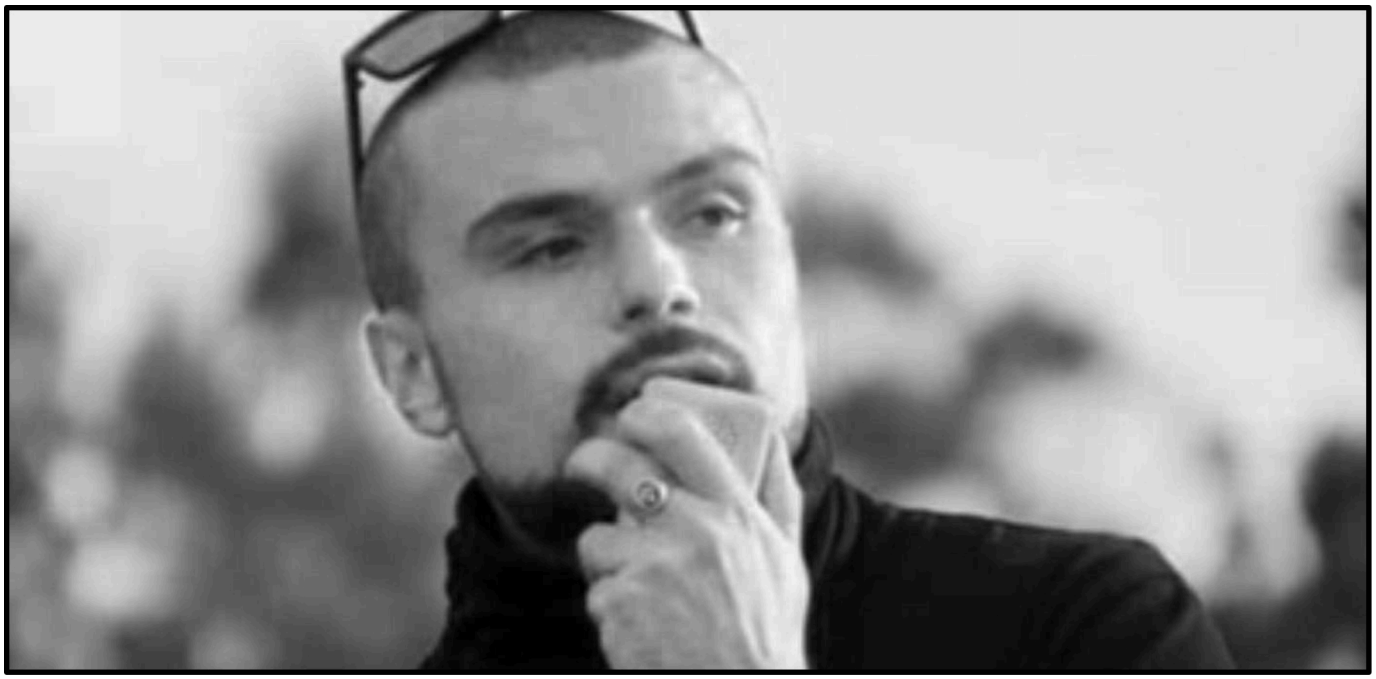
It should be clear that these "criticisms" are deeply unserious. Arguments in Reddit and Instagram comments sections are not "media control". The claim that student publications are "afraid" of criticising SAlt are blatantly not true, it is much harder to find one saying anything positive about SAlt than attacking it (Lot's Wife ran a sensationalist hit piece on SAlt titled 'Inside the Cult of the Monash Socialist Alternative Club' as recently as this year, from an 'anonymous' contributor). Now, either student journalists are genuine cowards who are too afraid to criticise anything lest they be criticised themselves (granted, many journalists are guilty of this), or there are mountains being made of molehills.

When these people attempt to make a serious critique of SAlt's politics, they only manage to make numerous factual errors that ruin their overall argument. In a June post, Stories of Socialist Alternative makes a variety of claims and statements about SAlt and its origins.

They try to connect SAlt to the UK Socialist Workers Party, infamous for its sexual assaults which were covered up by leading members such as Alex Callinicos. However, SAlt is not at all connected to the UK SWP (except in adherence to Tony Cliff's politics): Solidarity is, as a member of the International Socialist Tendency.

Their description of Trotskyism as an "off-shoot of Marxism from the 1940s that advocates for a vanguard revolution as the only solution to capitalism-induced problems" [sic] is similarly surreal. While I can't expect them to become Trotskyism experts overnight, one would think they would reference the core political points made by Trotsky, most famously the theory of Permanent Revolution. Of course, it must be mentioned that "vanguard revolution" is not an idea limited to Trotsky: it can be traced back to Marx, Engels, or even Kautsky. They then describe vanguardism as a "tendency of socialism from below".

It is hard to give a serious response to what are a series of deeply unserious accusations levied by people who are broadly guilty of the same thing. While attacking Socialist Alternative for



BPU leader Keiran speaks at a rally | PHOTO: ListenNotes

paper sales, recruitment campaigns and charging a membership fee, many other Socialist groups which do the same thing (such as Socialist Alliance and Solidarity) seem to fly under the radar. Solidarity is 'guilty' of many of the same charges levied at SAlt, yet the attention is thrown at SAlt specifically.

Attacks against the Victorian Socialists (VS) by "Socialist" Greens are pretty overt: they are scared of being flanked from the Left by an ostensibly Socialist electoral project. While the Victorian Socialists have numerous problems of their own, for Socialists in the state, they are a much better voting option than the Greens (a capitalist party). Attacks against VS by the Greens tend to be nothing more than left-bashing.

Special mention should be made of Keiran and the BPU. Despite being Stalinists cut from the CPA/ACP (Australian Communist Party) cloth, Keiran and the BPU have a pernicious following amongst left-liberals who otherwise denounce Marxism-Leninism, Stalin, the USSR, etc. It is obvious that these left-liberals cling to Keiran and the BPU for legitimacy: a core part of 'left-identity politics' is finding a diverse person who says something you agree with, and then propping them up as some kind of 'expert'. Perhaps this is why Keiran and the BPU have remained tight-lipped on issues around, for example, China's nation-building policies in Xinjiang and broader repression of Uighurs in the region.

What's actually wrong with SAlt?

What does a 'genuine' critique of Socialist Alternative look like? We should be criticising SAlt for taking the form of a sect, not aiming to build a mass party, for an over-focus on student politics, for not connecting to the working class, and for existing mainly as a propaganda circle (a 300+ person propaganda circle is still a propaganda circle).

Many on the Socialist Left defensively clung to SAlt in response to attacks from Keiran and Rakey Healing. However, this defence is unfounded. While SAlt is ostensibly the largest group on the left with 300+ members (exact numbers unknown), it has little to no impact on the broader movement outside of mostly insular circles of radicals.

While some SAlt members are in unions (notably, the NTEU at Unis where they have student clubs), their 'pull' in these unions is marginal, and they mostly take the same role as CPA members: becoming union activists pretending to be rank and file crusaders – a strategy of intervening in unions to seek reforms as opposed to building class power.

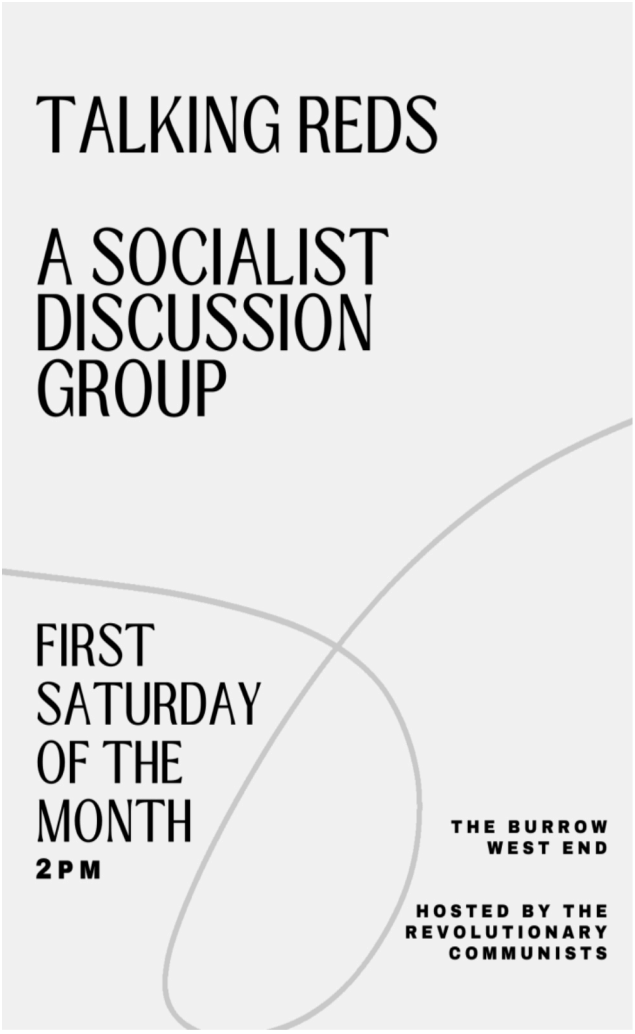
Outside of the activist or student left, SAlt is pretty much invisible. Granted, this could be said of other Socialist groups (such as

Solidarity!), but SAlt is particularly bad for this due to their size. 300+ is not a tiny amount. While 300+ is small compared to 25M, it is still a fairly large amount of people who could be turned into cadres and used to build the workers movement, build the communist movement, and establish a firm basis for a workers party (through re-unification with communists).

However, SAlt does not do this. It seems that SAlt has very strange priorities indeed, with their student cadres focusing more on student elections and SRCs than in unionisation drives, fighting for democratic student organisations, or even fighting to build an off-campus, communist youth organisation (things that should be considered the bare minimum for serious communists).

Many of these issues can be attributed to SAlt's middle class sectarianism, which turns away well-meaning sympathisers who would otherwise be sympathetic to communism.

That being said, the charges of SAlt being a "cult" boil down to the liberal use of 'therapy-speak', pure and simple. If these people want to be taken seriously, they should try taking themselves seriously first.



Freedom for all political prisoners!

Partisan Editors

As Russia continues to wage an imperialist war against Ukraine, Communists of all stripes have fallen under the boot of state repression (both in Russia and Ukraine). Oppose the Moscow and Kyiv gangsters, demand the release of all political prisoners!

Russian Marxist Boris Kagarlitsky was imprisoned by the Russian state under phony "anti-terrorism" charges in 2023. As of February 2024, he has been sentenced to five years in a prison colony (Meduza).

Ukrainian Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotiuk was arrested by the Ukrainian Security Service on April 25th 2024. As of writing, he is being held in Nikolaev in deplorable conditions. He is being falsely charged with being a Russian state operative and a propagandist for Moscow's imperialist invasion. If found guilty, he faces a life sentence (WSWS).

Many more communists, trade unionists, and anti-war protesters are being incarcerated arbitrarily by the Russian and Ukrainian governments. We must support them all, and demand their immediate release.

In addition, the Partisan calls for the freedom of all political prisoners, such as Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier who still languish in the prisons of the American imperialists. In Britain, the Filton 10 now face years in prison for their actions against the war profiteers at Elbit Systems. One of these comrades, Zoë Rogers, has just spent her 21st Birthday behind bars.

Freedom to the Prisoners!

Abortion struggle re-ignited in Queensland; where to from here?

QLD Premier David Cristafulli | PHOTO: The Australian

Michael Ruhl

On the day following the election of David Crisafulli's LNP, the National Union of Students (NUS) Queer Office called a rally in the Brisbane CBD to defend abortion access for the following Friday, the first of November. The NUS Queer Office is currently held by Socialist Alternative (SA), and effectively acts as a proxy for SA to call protests. I attended this first post-election protest along with comrade Edith, and several RCO sympathisers. About 400 or so fellow travellers attended, and whilst small, the protest was lively and energetic. Many visibly queer and trans comrades were present, along with members of SA, Labor Left, and a surprisingly small Greens presence (perhaps still shaken by their underperformance at the previous week's election). The remainder were made up firstly by generally apolitical women, and secondly by the final cohort that we refer to as "the boyfriends".

The politics of this first protest were tepid to say the least. Speakers from SA put forward a reformist politics that essentially tailed the ALP; they did not attempt to wrangle the economic causes behind the push to restrict abortion access, rather blaming an amorphous coalition of "bigots". The speeches by both SA and the Labor Left member simply appeared to call for more protests to defend against any potential attacks on reproductive access, hardly a way forward that can not simply be ignored by a government with the bulk of its petit-bourgeois support base located in the regional and rural towns. A CFMEU delegate spoke of the need to defend queer rights and abortion access, and the role that CFMEU organisers have played in opposing the worst excesses of sexism in the workplace. Disappointingly, no mention was made by any of the speakers to the previous Labor government's failure to provide equitable access to abortion. Despite the progressive reforms of the last government, abortion in Queensland remains costly, and often impossible to reach for women in regional and rural areas.

Worst still, no mention was made of the ability of the religious concerns of certain doctors to allow them to not give a referral for an abortion. If you are hundreds of kilometres from the nearest abortion clinic, and the one doctor in town is a Catholic conservative opposed to abortion, you are out of luck; you will be made to care for a child against your will. This situation is allowed because the Labor government did not enforce their own laws that required doctors to provide a duty of care. Though of these speeches, perhaps the only one that could reasonably be called objectionable, and even appalling at that, was one by a professional who thanked the Australian Medical Association! The very same labour cartel that is the main obstacle to free healthcare in this country! The doctors that make up the AMA support abortion being legal, not because they support women's liberation, but only because it is a way for them to fleece women of thousands of dollars who lack any other options (so much for being 'pro-choice'!). They do not support the necessary step to women's reproductive autonomy, which is not just legal abortion in a legalistic, bourgeois sense, but abortion that is totally free and universally accessible; because if it is not free, then for many working-class women, it might as well not exist.

The second protest called by NUS for the following Friday had markedly better politics. SA speakers openly demanded for free, and accessible abortion, and several speakers had made mention of workers' struggle, including

A pro-choice rally in Queensland in the lead up to the state election | PHOTO: The Guardian

the use of strikes to achieve political demands. Whilst the church was mentioned this time along with the LNP as being behind the push, the complicity of the ALP and AMA in inhibiting universal abortion access remained unmentioned. Fortunately, however, this time none of the speakers promoted either of these bodies. The protest itself carried over the high energy from the previous week, whilst slightly growing in size. Roughly 500 people attended, and the crowd was notably younger, and more queer than the previous week. We had no issues handing out several dozen copies of Partisan, and over a hundred flyers for our CWF information meeting the following day.

The movement to defend and expand abortion access already has momentum before the new Parliament has begun sitting. NUS have since called for a demonstration outside Parliament on the the 28th of November, the first sitting date since the election (as of the time of publication, this date has yet to pass). This indicates some sort of strategy behind the movement, as opposed to seemingly calling for protests at random. This is a positive development and combined with the more radical posturing by SA organisers at the second protest, has to some extent allayed fears held by RCO comrades that SA will fall into Labor tailism.

As there is no longer a Communist Party, it is a given that the ALP will recuperate this current struggle in its entirety. The question we then ask is, what direction will the left-wing of the movement go? There have already been discussions and moves towards establishing a united front for women's liberation, not just within the RCO but with other sects in Brisbane. In the absence of a Party, a United Front is the best way forward, as this will create a small (roughly 20-30) Brisbane-based group of comrades from the sects who can coordinate the movement of all member groups in this struggle. A successful Front will help with building the class consciousness of the advanced layers of the proletariat and bringing them into the struggle. Through both its work between the sects, and the creation of radical women's publications that serve as a running commentary on the struggle (such as Bread & Roses), they will also act as a ground of critique and political refinement for the whole of the communist movement. All of the above are invaluable steps towards rebuilding the Communist Party. This is necessary if we are serious about eventually wresting control of the women's struggle from the Laborite careerists, that is not to even speak of taking state power. If either of these are to happen, communists need to move past their deep-rooted sectarianism, and begin the work in building the Communist Women's Front as the next step towards re-building the Party.

The merry-go-round of activism | ARTIST: Kirsten Hoffman

Communists and Rising Tide

Kirsten Hoffman

The climate activist merry-go-round in Australia goes like this: disaster season (summer) destroys sections of Oceania in flood, fire, smoke and/or heatwaves, taking lives, creating internally displaced evacuees who join climate activism with a vengeance (or blame cloud-seeding); summer into autumn is spent in training; there are weeks of sustained Blockade Australia disruption, generally to the world's largest coal port, in winter; followed by Rising Tide doing a mid-year coal train jump; followed by court battles to keep all climate and environmental activists as free from penalties and bail conditions as possible, which they should be; followed by Rising Tide's court battles over their Notice of Intention (Form 1), a legal mechanism that in this context allows Rising Tide to block the shipping channel for a set period of time without arrest, combined with the Harbour Master shutting the port to coal ships and other large ships (these ships are too heavy to

stop); followed by the anarchist Climate COPout in Sydney at the same time as the yearly United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC COP); Climate COPout being a series of workshops, rallies and bike processions that do not lodge a Notice of Intention; Rising Tide wrestles with last-minute attempts by the NSW government to stop them, like a Marine Exclusion Zone this year that was overturned by the Supreme Court on the day it was set to begin; Rising Tide blocks the world's largest coal port with a line of kayaks and at least a hundred activists are arrested; Rising Tide's court dates are set for next year; Blockade Australia finishes their severity appeals in the Newcastle District Court; in summer we swelter; the disasters go again.

For this merry-go-round to be more fruitful, communists and anarcho-communists must join in the organising of Climate COPout and Rising Tide. There are local mini-groups of each group, and if you do not like organising with anarchists or reformists, form a red bloc with your buddy/s. My main critique isn't of Rising Tide, but that I think communists and anarchists have been lazy. Thankfully I think comrades are good enough sports to accept this. Someone has to scrub the kitchen fireplace and that is where you make friends. Be ambitious and bring a sail dinghy: our networks are strong enough that someone has one.

Communism was more visible at Rising Tide this year, though unionism has taken a dive. One of the angriest and saddest demands against capitalism and the patriarchy, came at the nighttime beach vigil for murdered Naarm 19-year-old Isla Bell, whose uncle was on the way to Rising Tide when he received the call that her body had been found. Angry unionists stood on the windy beach on Saturday night and said 'I don't know where you all stand on this but CAPITALISM is to blame for this - and the PATRIARCHY'. I am furious at the death of Isla Bell and you should be too. Many at Rising Tide knew her or her uncle, and the leftwing community of Naarm searched for her. Femicide is constant in Australia and the coal ships should not be a distraction. Isla's uncle's friends say she would have supported Rising Tide.

Protesters at Rising Tide | PHOTO: Rising Tide

Rising Tide's spokes-council did not vote to support the CFMEU, and the reasons for that are more complex than 'we are petty bourgeoisie who hate the unions'. Failing to support the unions does show a lack of long-term vision, but it is also bad politics for forestry workers to shoot at forest activists.

I spoke to an on-shift dock worker who agreed with Rising Tide's climate protests. He was against the NSW anti-protest laws, and compared it to the police busting the dock strikes, though said his crew thought differently. (He seemed against immigrant workers, but a start's a start.) A surly boy said on the phone nearby 'it's a protest about Palestine or some shit' and was more annoyed by loud girls scaring away his fish. A child delightedly and angrily told us that a seagull ate the fish he released, while his dad was not a fan of anyone stopping ships, but could see why someone kept a look-out through binoculars.

What's most important are the people on the outside of the protest. The dock worker complained that no one thought to notice them or ask if they supported. There were fewer hecklers than last year. It reminded me of how annoyed I am when street marches address their message at the people in suits, when the people who matter are painting the building walls, serving coffee and working in the chemist. The best flyering at Climate COPout was for those people. I am done with loudspeakers wasting words on the ruling class.

We must get rid of the irrelevant king and his family, plan our economy, and practise airships and solar-and-wind powered transport ships on the harbours. That's a better vision than telling people to 'degrow'.

The Rising Tide ‘Protestival’

Maxine E

There is revolutionary potential in every atmosphere of love and joy, but it is not subversive in and of itself. This is the lesson to be drawn from Rising Tide’s ‘protestival’.

From the 21st - 24th of November, Newcastle harbour shook with joyful marches, environmentalist music, and the laughter of children. Rising Tide planned the action, an environmentalist group that has been around for more than twenty years. Our goal was to block the Newcastle Coal Port, which is responsible for 1% of all global emissions. For a handful of hours, activists aboard kayaks and ships delayed travel through the port.

It was difficult not to come away from the protestival without feeling cynical. There were such enormous expressions of joy. Yet so little was achieved. It seems unlikely that very much will be achieved in Rising Tide, while it remains limited to protest politics. Criticisms of capitalism were common, but were followed by calls to action to get in a kayak, or vote Greens, or to keep holding rallies. We have been doing this for so long, when will it work?

Many environmentalists, especially those who are older, appreciate the party atmosphere. They are probably tired of the sober and, eventually, ineffectual civil rights and anti-war movements. War continues. The gap has not closed. We chant, “never again!” as more women and Queers are murdered.

The protestival offered many a chance to express their frustrations. To keep the fire alive in their hearts and find common community with others who feel their pain. A chance to laugh, cry, and rage. Many expressed how Rising Tide demonstrated that they, “will not be silenced!”

But who is listening?

Protesters at Rising Tide | PHOTO: Rising Tide

What is the role of these emotions, when there is no revolutionary struggle? It seems more like a catholic confession, where the sinner breaks the church’s doctrine yet reimposes it by guiltily admitting it to a priest.

Rising Tide is a yearly purification of ourselves. We party, we protest, we pray for absolution in the form of legal reform, and we go home feeling better about ourselves, without making a difference.

Nonetheless, for all of the rationalism of Marxism, it would be a mistake to de-emphasise the role that love, rage, melancholy, and yearning all play in the building of revolutions. Love is an expanding of horizons. In every act of love, there is an opportunity to understand the struggles of another. To link their struggle to your’s.

Through loving those close to us, we have an opportunity to love all humanity. This is the qualitative change in mindset required for revolutionary thinking, to realise the commonality of all the exploited, and the universality of their struggle for freedom. It means to define oneself in one’s own terms. To organise and take power for ourselves. To make our vision of the world true, rather than beg for inclusion into theirs.

Revolutions are built on people tired of losing those they love to war, starvation, violence, destruction, prejudice, loneliness. They are built on those who demand an end to the killing. Those who imagine a brighter future.

The protestival was a collective of people sharing a common grief. In this way, it has revolutionary potential. Communists should continue to agitate for revolutionary consciousness in Rising Tide for this reason.

The Rising Tide 'protestival' | PHOTO: Rising Tide

There was a larger Communist presence at Rising Tide this year and this is promising. But few at the protestival really imagine a revolution, or social transformation. Regardless of what they say, they demand modest reforms.

These demands are truly demands in the sense they are asking something of someone else. People do not imagine themselves as taking power for themselves, and of imposing their vision for a better world. It's as if everyone is waiting for something to happen or for the capitalist state to finally start listening.

Palestine rallies have begun to serve this purpose too. The rhetoric has changed from lively demands for an end to complicity, to solemn recognition of complicity. Feeling powerless, we satisfy ourselves that at least we stood vigil and didn't turn away from the suffering, unlike the others. Pride parades adopt this tone too. We remember the fallen, and we wait for someone else to save us.

These are symptoms of our powerlessness.

But powerlessness is an illusion and a self-fulfilling prophecy. We make this world. Constantly, every day, we make the choice to let it continue or not. Just as easily, we can decide to unmake it. Grief for those we have lost, and love for those we wish not to, can be the driving force of genuine transformation.

Rather than shying away from the antics of the protestival, Communists should embrace them. This is not to say that we should shy away from criticism. On the contrary, we should point out to Rising Tide goers that only revolution can offer them what they seek. We should welcome the partying and go even further!

We must argue that limiting ourselves to therapy, confession, protest, and partying would dishonour our grief and love. Absent of the struggle, these things trap us in the very system that denigrates us. We are in an abusive relationship.

We must make the argument that the only true resolution to grief is revolution. And that the only true realisation of love is communism.

The climate movement yearns

The COPout People's blockade | PHOTO: GreenLeft

Miki

The Australian climate movement is yearning for an answer to the environmental predicament haunting humanity. There's just one problem.

We don't have an answer to rally behind yet.

Capitalism, colonialism, consumerism, industrialisation, corruption, lying and narcissism are all blamed as the root causes of the climate crisis. Yet, the strategies for moving forward struggle to find mass appeal. We say we want 'climate action.' But what does that really mean to us?

The strange thing about the politics of Climate COPout was that the attendees clearly wish for a swift, democratic and egalitarian transition. But this desire is easily lost in the exhibition of rage and discontent at the apathy of the global capitalist leadership.

Blocking intersections isn't climate action.

When we lack a notion of utopia to strive for, the best we can do is prepare for a 'soft landing.' This is why 'degrowth' comes up a lot, along with fetishised indigenous mythologies and even cruder reactionary fantasies of an anarcho-primitivist decline in these environmental spaces. Our comrades are sincerely concerned. They want freedom and security. Can we really blame them for not trusting the messianic fantasy of a communist state that abolishes itself?

Australians generally find the prospect of communism to be absurd. This is only partially due to the domination the economy and our media impose on us.

The ineffective and often self-marginalising politics of the 'socialist' left are symptoms of the same problem. We don't believe in ourselves or each other. This often means that even though we like to pose as revolutionaries, we find ourselves begging the ruling class to just throw money at the problem.

The People's Blockade appeals to a larger section of the Australian public than COPout. The attendees are mostly older and middle class. Or they're younger, fresher activists. Both demographics are scared and angry. Unfortunately this particular 'protestival' would not assuage our fears. It was unclear what its politics actually were.

When we talk about climate change, we're really talking about a 'symptom' of capitalism. When we engage in disruptive climate activism we are petitioning for a global movement that is willing to radically transform society.

Rising Tide has demands; like many climate organisations, it sees them as common sense. Yet the cancellation of all new fossil fuel projects and a 78% tax on export profits would be a revolution itself. We will never be able to petition our petro-state to abolish itself. Australia is no different than Azerbaijan or Saudi Arabia. We may be marginally more 'liberal.' But we are still just a banana republic; the bananas are coal.

The People's Blockade was a hodge podge of political perspectives. The four socialist stalls were separated either because of interpersonal weirdness and grudges or alternatively: different styles of badge. Then there was a stall for Palestine, the scientists' rebellion, and a marquee where friendly indigenous guys cooked steak sandwiches for themselves and whoever else was tired of the vegan meals organised by Rising Tide in reusable plastic bowls. This movement is diverse. At the same time, it falls short of engaging with what needs to be done. We need to take matters into our own hands.

The channel the coal ships glide through was blocked briefly on Sunday and 170 people were arrested. The whole thing felt like a media stunt with a festival next to it. It was not an example of unsilenceable rage at Australia's baffling level of inaction. And it pointed to a worrying trend I'm noticing within climate activism.

As it stands the climate movement is going to continue being dominated by a 'managerial elite' until it can actually realise a political program that regular people can help to implement. If regular people are just there to get arrested, they will inevitably be cajoled by savvy organisers who develop the skills of getting people arrested. This isn't good enough, nor is it what most people want. We want climate action.

'Climate action' necessitates a planned economy on a global scale. The climate movement needs to come to terms with this if it wants to succeed. The people on the ground, attending these events and petitioning for a faster transition want this even more than the organisers. It is clear to me that most people who are seriously engaged with "climate politics," whether they know it or not, desire a 'communist' revolution. I say revolution in the sense that this kind of climate transition is necessarily revolutionary. If it isn't communist it will be fascist. Unfortunately, I do see the potential for some of these groups in the climate movement to fall towards ecofascism. But until they do, we have to find a better way of communicating with them about the necessity for a mass movement that can actually steer the global economy. There is no one running the economic system right now.

I think there are three main points we need the climate movement to internalise:

The ruling class won't implement a 'just transition.' They couldn't even if they wanted to.

A just climate transition, in this late stage of history, must be centrally planned and democratically administered by the global working class.

This transition will transform all of our institutions. It will look like a communist revolution even if it is totally 'nonviolent.'

The great lie that we must reject, is that the capitalist class, their political lackeys, and their media fixers, can actually solve this predicament. The ecological predicament is capitalism. That is all it is. This means that as much as the capitalists might like to help, as much as they might empathise, they cannot resist the incentives of the system they benefit from. We cannot get them to abolish themselves.

"As much as the capitalists might like to help... they cannot resist the incentives of the system they benefit from. We cannot get them to abolish themselves. "

We can only abolish capitalism, and fix the planet's biosphere by exerting our collective power on the world and the political system. Power doesn't come from slogans or chants or getting arrested. It comes from hard work, cooperation and serious planning. It comes from having difficult conversations with people you don't know very well and finding a task you can both work towards completing. It requires politics.

If we allow history to be something violently imposed upon us, we will be denying our role in creating it. The climate movement whether it likes it or not implicitly imposes this powerlessness on itself. We are all scared of change. But change is coming whether we like it or not. Let us beckon in a new system, rather than a dead planet, that prioritises the political authority of the working class.

Marx called this system the "dictatorship of the proletariat," and what he meant was the dictation of society, by the majority — the workers. It would be a process of the whole of humanity coming into consciousness of itself. A realisation of our collective potential. A transition into history. We could conceivably solve all ecological problems, end war, and provide the necessities of life for everyone so that they can develop into the people they want to be and leave the world better than they found it for their children.

This is what the climate movement yearns for.

Climate COP-Out

Anonymous

This month, the 29th annual United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP29) climate summit brought world leaders to Baku, Azerbaijan for climate talks.

In the same week, grassroots activists from around this continent held Climate Cop-Out, a four-day event on Gadigal Land, so-called Sydney, indicting COP as a greenwashing mechanism masquerading as climate action, used to subdue the populace and continue business as usual.

This year in Azerbaijan, a senior official at COP29 was secretly filmed agreeing to facilitate fossil fuel deals during the summit in exchange for sponsorship. Days later, the nation's president told the summit that oil and gas are a 'gift of god'. The conference's chairman, Azerbaijan's minister for ecology and natural resources, is a former oil executive, and towards the end of the conference, a Saudi Arabian official was accused of editing an official COP29 negotiating text.

We have seen a clear pattern of the COP summits being held in petrostates, and scandals like these occur each year.

Last year, when the summit was held in Dubai, major outlets reported on leaked documents which revealed the United Arab Emirates planned to use its position as the COP28 host to pursue oil and gas deals with other governments. The summit's president was quoted saying there is "no science" to support that phasing out fossil fuels is necessary to prevent global heating to 1.5°C.

COP27, held in Egypt, was accused of greenwashing while holding an estimated 60,000 political prisoners behind bars, and saw over 600 fossil fuel lobbyists in attendance.

It's no surprise that this year Papua New Guinea boycotted the climate talks, labelling it a "waste of time" where all the world's biggest polluters get together to make empty promises.

Now Australia and the Pacific are locked in a bidding war with Türkiye over who gets to play host in 2026.

I travelled down from the north of this continent to Gadigal Land to set up for and participate in Climate Cop-Out, to call out our world's governments and corporations for copping out of the urgent climate action we so desperately need.

It was my first time entering the grassroots landscape in so-called Sydney and it felt like an entirely different environment to our activist community back home. I'd travelled down with my housemates who've been active in New South Wales as a part of Blockade Australia, and already had established networks around the continent.

When we arrived on Saturday night, five days before Climate Cop-Out was set to begin, our first stop was an apartment block in a neighbourhood a fair ways away from the CBD. In true activist fashion, the small two-bedroom apartment housed five people, and took the four of us in for the next two nights. Some of the tenants were my friends, and others I'd met for the first time, but the space was as warm and welcoming as you can expect from the grassroots community.

Sunday morning would be when we'd start setting up for the event. After a breakfast of dumpster dived vegan sausages, zucchini and homemade sauerkraut, we headed down to the Addison Road Community Centre to get to work.

"This used to be an army depot," my housemate told me as we joined a long queue of vehicles driving into the gates.

I could see market stalls set up straight ahead as we wound through the carpark and around the back of the lot where a long line of marketgoers queued for the Hospo for Palestine bake sale.

Nestled in the suburb of Marrickville, the centre hosts more than just Sunday farmers' markets, with a strong focus on human rights and community support, offering services of all kinds for marginalised members of the

COP29 delegates meet in Baku, Azerbaijan | PHOTO: Getty

community. From a food pantry, community radio station, and a re-use and repair cooperative to disability services, art exhibition spaces, and community legal centres, this place encompasses what it is to build community.

Addi Road had given us an old drill hall to use for our event, with its only current occupants being the pigeons nesting in the rafters.

That afternoon, I went on my first dumpster dive in Gadigal Land with a new friend, and the haul was far more fruitful than anything we'd usually find back home.

Early on Tuesday morning, I set off with a friend with brooms and cleaning supplies to the squat that others had checked out weeks earlier, one that was used last year by the out-of-state crew during the COP28 protests. We stopped at a broken fence on a narrow neighbourhood street, and he ducked through the hole, holding open for me the cardboard that concealed it. We weaved through the long, overgrown backyard, dodging spiderwebs and branches, eventually reaching the townhouse. He reached through an empty window frame to unlock the dusty back door, revealing what would soon become home for about a dozen activists over the next week.

"It looks like no one's been here since last year," my friend said as we walked inside.

The large back room still housed the makeshift benches, kitchen and hangout spaces that had been put together last year using milk crates, wooden planks, and rugs. Colourful graffiti of varying styles adorned the walls of every room, and as we walked down the narrow hallway, I noticed that none had doors on their hinges anymore. Electricity still powered the house, and the plumbing was still working and intact. That night, we moved in.

The next few days were much of the same kind of work: cleaning up, finding furniture and supplies, setting up the space, dumpster diving for food and cooking for the group, and pasting posters for the event around town.

DAY 1

By Thursday, the old, decrepit drill hall at Addi Road had been transformed into a warm and welcoming space for the event to begin.

We were kicking off the event at 1pm, with banner making and bicycle repair on the schedule to prepare for our bike rally early the following day. At 6pm, we received a beautiful Welcome to Country from Aunty Rhonda who yarned with us about country and her family. After dinner, the first workshop and perhaps one of the most important workshops of Climate Cop-Out began: What is COP, and why is it a climate cop-out?

To understand what COP truly is, we have to look at it in the context of the United Nations, a state-based system that operates under global capitalism.

Activists march to Hyde Park from Town Hall on the third day of Climate Cop-Out protests | PHOTO: Author

UN climate change conferences began in 1992 with the Earth Summit hosted in Brazil. Its aim was to address stabilising greenhouse gas emissions, and it led to the creation of the annual COP summits which then began in 1995.

COP3 in Japan in 1997 saw the creation of the Kyoto Protocol, the first international treaty to set targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change, and it went in force in 2005. Emissions of course continued to rise, and at COP21 in France, 196 countries pledged to prevent global temperatures from rising above 2°C under the Paris Agreement. Last year's COP28 marked the most significant stocktake of progress since the Paris Agreement. Some of the key outcomes of this summit were calls for a transition away from fossil fuels, the establishment of a "loss and damage" fund, a pledge to triple renewable energy capacity and double the global rate of energy efficiency, net zero emissions by 2030, and the admission that the goal of the 1.5°C global warming limit was at risk.

COP frames the climate crisis as an economic problem to be solved by market mechanisms, rather than a systemic problem caused by the domination of an extractive capitalist system. It mirrors modern capitalism's centreless nature and its inability to assign any one party responsibility for it. All players have agreed on what a 'safe level' of climate change is based on how it affects GDP growth, and every solution put forward is framed around this. Every scandal that's come out of COP summits should not be considered a failure, but rather a function of a capitalist system.

These discussions were grim but necessary to understand how an organ of capitalism like the UN and its COP conferences aren't broken and needing to be fixed to properly combat the climate crisis. They're functioning exactly the way they're supposed to.

DAY 2

Friday morning kicked off at 8am with a bike rally through the CBD. I was a little nervous, having not ridden a bike since I was about eleven years old, and I definitely wasn't prepared for how difficult it is to ride slowly. Nevertheless, the rally went off without a hitch, and we brought the city's traffic down to a crawl.

Then came workshops on extreme weather systems and how they work, and threat, grief and collective preservation. In the evening, we gathered in Martin Place for a speakout, urging anybody who wished to speak to step up to the microphone and share their thoughts

on climate change and the COP summits. We held space despite the rain and listened to a range of speakers and perspectives.

For Friday's film night, we screened Power Lands, where Navajo filmmaker Ivey Camille Manybeads Tso explores how Indigenous people have been displaced and environments have been destroyed by extractive corporate practices around the world, including the land on which she was born. It shows us how resistance and solutions come from the grassroots, and it serves as a reminder that we simply cannot rely on those who are making this planet sick to heal it.

DAY 3

On Saturday morning, we held the main rally of the Climate Cop-Out event at Town Hall. We weren't sure how it would go, having not obtained a Notice of Intention to Hold a Public Assembly.

After hearing from speakers, we set out on a short march to Hyde Park where we vastly outnumbered the six or so police officers that weren't expecting our traffic disruption. I don't think I've ever marched with so few police around. We used our power to hold space at the final intersection, bringing traffic to a total halt, only to be pushed off by a newly-arrived riot police line. By then, we were gathered by the edge of the park, well off the road, thinking we were in the clear of anything going wrong, when one of the larger officers began walking through the group, back and forth, throwing out agitating comments at protesters. One protester approached the officer, telling him to leave. I couldn't see the interaction, but things quickly became heated and suddenly my friend was on the ground, being held down by at least four really big men. Other friends were being pushed over, trying to intervene in the violent arrest, but our friend was quickly lifted and taken away in a police vehicle.

Emotions were high at this moment. Her arrest was unexpected and unnecessarily violent, brought on by provocation and agitation from the police themselves after we'd already ended our rally. It's something that never gets any easier to watch happen to your friends.

I spent most of the rest of the day sitting on the warm concrete across the road from Surry Hills Police Station waiting for our friend to be released and missed the afternoon's workshops on craftivism and the Australian electoral system.

When we finally returned to Addi Road, we were just in time for dinner and the evening's open mic and music night, where we heard from some of the grassroots groups operating on Gadigal Land and saw performances by local musicians.

Activists march to Hyde Park from Town Hall on the third day of Climate Cop-Out protests. (Photo Credits Author)

DAY 4

By Sunday, most of us were feeling the exhaustion of the week. The morning started off with a pretty relaxed environment, where those who were in attendance sat around on cushions and couches writing letters to imprisoned climate activists around the world.

I chose to write to Fran Thompson, a woman imprisoned in Nebraska, United States for killing her ex-partner after he broke into her home and threatened her life on a Sunday evening in 1991. Before her arrest, she'd been a pre-law student and a campaigner for environmental and animal rights and was previously at odds with her county's prosecutor for her work. She's now over 70 years old and still behind bars 30 years later.

In the afternoon, we heard about acting on the climate crisis from a panel of speakers including marine researcher Professor David Booth, Kiribati Climate Action Network's National Coordinator Robert Karoro, former NSW Senator Lee Rhiannon, and Blockade Australia activist Max Curmi.

Then finally, to wrap up the four-day event, we sat around a whiteboard and contemplated where to go from here for future Climate Cop-Out mobilisations, and activists pondered a key message Karoro left us with on the possibility that COP comes to Australia in 2026: make COP31 the last COP.

From dust to dust: A history of the BLF, and the fight for Green Bans

Brunhilda Olding

The current assault on the CFMEU by the Albanese government has drawn much attention to the legacy and political actions of the predecessor to the CFMEU, the Builders-Labourers Federation (BLF). While most understood today in popular memory as a union of corrupt thugs with Norm Gallagher being singled out in popular memory the BLF is perhaps one of the best examples of genuinely radical unionism in Australian history. The history of the fight inside the BLF, prior to its days as the radical union known and loved by most of the communist movement in Australia (with the exception of the League of Internationalist Communists) is as important as is understanding the political evolution and context behind the Green Bans and the Communist movement at the height of the BLF.

Indeed, in many ways the story of the Green Bans is the story of the Old and the New Left merging together. Taking forward the organisational and mass movement-based approaches of the old post-Marxist Leninist left with the more widespread focus on specific oppression of the emerging new left. But in others it is the last hurrah of the height of the Australian Communist movement. It is the last hurrah of a mass movement that was proportionally the biggest in the English-speaking world.

The Early days of the BLF

For a union that has such a radical memory the BLF in the 1940's was a deeply conservative union more alike to the much-maligned SDA, or AWU of today than the militant radical and effective force it would later become renowned as. Indeed, compared to the Building Workers' Industrial Union the BLF was a flat-out reactionary union, with little presence on the work site and a deeply conciliatory relationship to the Master Builders Association. Under the leadership of Fred Thomas, the union was a fundamentally conciliatory union with a rabid hatred for Communism and a total disengagement with either their members or broader social issues. During the post-war rise of militancy, the Communist Party grew in the minds of many anti-communists to the position of an existential threat. A position that was very much not warranted in either material or ideological terms. Yet that didn't mean that the BLF under Thomas wouldn't do all they could to fight against the Communist party. Including a 1945 NSW branch meeting passing a resolution explicitly outlining a total rejection of the CPA's politics and outright stating that members who worked with the CPA or members in the CPA would be expelled.

It would take years of work by dedicated Communist party members already within the union to build up a genuine rank and file group. This campaign would face assaults from the union leadership who relied on physical offensives to break up the small communist forces in the union. The CPA intervention, unlike what a lot of other sects have relayed on, was based on a few members already in the union producing their own publication The Hoist. The extent of the CPA's role in this endeavour was helping print it and enabling the education of their members leading this charge. Whilst the CPA was as they are now still wedded to the idea of a popular front government under the leadership of the ALP, this tactic of slow consciousness raising and consistent fighting is one that worked.

As the movement intervened into the union the struggle began to see more and more casualties. In South Australia the early 1950's saw seven officials expelled for being affiliated with the Communist Party. Thomas would grow increasingly anti-communist to the point that when Doc Evatt announced his and the ALP's opposition to the referendum that tried to ban the CPA Thomas would state to the media his desire for the BLF to rescind affiliation with the ALP. Now in an entirely unsurprising turn of events a rabid anti-communist as union leader didn't particularly

care for the members of his union which he hardly hid. Paul True noted several major examples of the extent that Thomas despised members of the union which he was elected to lead, including an immense distaste for workers who actually stood up for themselves and their rights, and the growing number of migrant workers.

This distaste for rank-and-file members created fertile ground for the Communist intervention, though at the start as with many of these projects it was mainly CPA members. But they kept working through the up and down waves that so determine union politics. Rather than simply treating it as a get rich quick scheme the CPA persevered and built connections. While the first inklings of the rank-and-file group were formed in the late 40's the first time they ran for office was in 1958, revealing the focus on the strategy of patience and building up genuine support and influence within the union. While the Rank and File lost the blatantly stacked election, they didn't betray their principles. Rather than try and call in the courts to force a recount the CPA influenced group held fast to the principle of class independence.

The counter-offensive that resulted was one that nearly threw the rank and file back to square zero. But they kept on fighting, and in many ways as Jack Mundey would later reflect the new Bodkin regime would be a blessing in disguise as the right of the union fractured, and the rank-and-file group gained three more years of experience organising, even as Sydney underwent a mass building boom. With buildings climbing towards the sky, for the rank-and-file organisers their work in some ways was only getting easier. This would culminate in a branch meeting which saw them force the union leadership back into their seats after an unconstitutional attempt to elect delegates to the federal council, which would kickstart the period of serious confrontation that would force the BLF as we know it today.

As the shambolic incompetence of the right-wing leadership was revealed in the courts it nearly seemed that the union would be deregistered nearly twenty years early. The fight for the BLF was being waged on two fronts: within the union, and in the courts. In a historical turn of irony, one of the lawyers involved in the case was none other than Ted Hill who would in three years go on to found the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist), a group deeply tied with the history of the BLF.

By November 1961 the Communist-influenced block had been elected to the leadership of the union. It had taken over a decade of work, but the electoral result had seen them eke out a narrow victory. The next six years would see a series of major crises as the right-wing of the union movement tried to push them out and recapture the BLF, but the strong focus on building up rank-and-file groups would prove vital to keeping the new leadership in, and by 1967, the right had suffered a series of major defeats that they would never recover from while the BLF still existed.

"Australian society was very different to what it is today - a period when to be a Communist wasn't relegated to the fringes of society but a genuine mass movement"

While in some ways the history of the fight to win the BLF is a history of the CPA's intervention into the union, it is also a history of the union movement during a period of mass economic growth, and when the political culture for communists within not just the union movement but Australian society was very different to what it is today - a period when to be a Communist wasn't relegated to the fringes of society but a genuine mass movement.

Which in turn makes the remainder of the BLF's history the story of the defeat of Australian Communism.

Green and Pink Bans

The discussion around the political context around the Green Bans must start with the history of the collapse of the original Communist Party of Australia at the beginning of the 1960's. Nikita Khrushchev's 1956 Secret Speech would herald the beginning of a worldwide realignment in the Marxist-Leninist tradition as the fault lines between Beijing and Moscow grew greater and greater.

In Australia this would culminate in the formation of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) by Ted Hill and his allies in 1964. A strong supporter of the Chinese line, the CPA (ML) would draw many of the most militant unionists in Victoria to their (often hidden) banner. Most prominently amongst them would be none other than one Norm Gallagher. Meanwhile the rump CPA would continue their evolution towards Eurocommunism. A drift that would culminate in the 1971 split of the most adamant Marxist-Leninists into the Socialist Party of Australia (who today bear the lofty title of the CPA), the SPA would take with them the BWIU, and many of the smaller craft and trade unions.

The new Eurocommunist tradition that was left was in many ways the natural evolution of the Stalinist popular front. Yet in some ways the BLF would buck the trend and remain closer to a more militantly proletarian force.

Meredith Burgman argues that a major part of why the BLF took up the cause of Green Bans was due to the position that Labourers held in tearing down housing and building to raise offices during a mass housing shortage. This only extended the fundamental alienation that these workers had between their labour and the social needs of society. From this alienation and a prior history of refusing to tear down buildings where residents still lived would evolve into the Green Bans of memory today.

Fundamentally the Green bans reflected the CPA's political turn into leftism, yet they also demonstrate the power of militant proletarian forces when they place their labour in the hands of social need rather than the anarchy of capitalist production. Whilst nowhere near what genuine socialisation of production would look like, it provides the seeds of a brief glimpse. A crucial example of this is the 1974 attempt to insert into the award that mandated that 60% of the work done in the building industry was to go into public buildings. Whilst nowhere near the social-based planning that a genuine socialised economy would operate under it provides a fascinating example of the strategies and demands used by the union beyond just the single small cases that are so famous.

The new tactics and strategies unleashed by the NSW BLF saw them famously building ties with Aboriginal Militants in Redfern, in the famous pink ban case the early Gay Liberation Movement, and of course with the Green bans the emerging environmental movement. Some might claim that this is a pioneering example of intersectionality, more accurately however, it is a representation of the fundamental nature of class struggle. Something that the BLF understood and organised around.

The capitalist counteroffensive

The first signs of the capitalist side of the offensive against the BLF in an entirely unsurprising turn came from the media. The notion of workers feeling that they had a right to determine how the city they lived in was built flew directly in the face of the capitalist media and the sensibilities of the bourgeois. Reading through Sydney newspapers of the early 1970's paints a clear picture of capitalist disgust at the working class, and at the same a begrudging acknowledgment that these moves were popular. An acknowledgment born from fear.

Alongside this, the Master Builders Association began to agitate for the deregistration of the union. The primary role that the New South Wales branch played in the Green Bans created a split between the federal and state branches. With the MBA agitating for an assault on the broader union, the political differences between the increasingly Eurocommunist CPA and the Maoist CPA-ML provided yet more fuel to the growing internal crisis.

At the same time the New South Wales government and police forces began to launch attack after attack on the union. Including arresting union representatives on job sites. The rhetoric spouted out in parliament sounds like a lazy writer simply hit copy and paste from parliamentary debates today, or more accurately this is just the farce in which history repeats. Claims of 'industrial anarchy' were met with the same cry as today. The need for an industrial dictatorship to preserve investment and economic growth.

Jack Mundey put it best: 'Because of our criticism of the Government and the way in which it has favoured so-called developers, because we have imposed environmental bans at the request of residents and other professional groups, we have caused the wrath of those powerful and vested financial interests, thus the attacks on this union.'

BLF members srike during the 'Green Bans', 1973 | PHOTO: Organizing.work

Whilst a theoretical explanation drawing on the rate of profit and so on is entirely possible, the simple explanation is that the NSW BLF was increasingly forming a counter-pole to the ideals of Labour peace that the Australian state has been built off. The greatest victory of Laborism in Australia was the formation of the Arbitration Courts a few years after Federation, no other victory has reinforced the power of the capitalist state quite like the first one.

With several different arenas of assault emerging the NSW BLF was increasingly on the back foot in a strategic sense. Now if it had been more than just the state section of one union (a state section that was engaged in a political brawl with the federal leadership) they would have had a chance. But the collapse of the CPA had shattered working class unity. Neither the SPA dominated unions, nor the CPA-ML controlled federal leadership would side with Mundey.

From 1973 the NSW BLF would be constantly on the back foot with internal assaults from above from Gallagher, and the government moving in on them, the NSW leadership was forced to dissolve their own branch in March 1975.

What road forward?

A lot of the left during the current offensive against the CFMEU has banged the drum of calling on the heritage of the BLF. A worthy comparison in some ways, but one turn of phrase keeps on turning up. 'Red Union' is a label with many implications. Implications that could correctly be applied to the BLF.

But not to the CFMEU. Whilst there are revolutionaries within the union, they have nowhere near the leadership that the CPA, and CPA-ML used to have. To call the CFMEU a red union is a total misunderstanding of both the political and economic roles that it plays in Australian society. The CFMEU is firmly wedded to the Laborist political system that the ALP once dominated. But as neoliberalism solidified its hold over the Australian state apparatus, the party began to take on an increasingly different role. The ALP is the party that can be trusted to take action against the unions and the working class by capital for the simple reason that it is the party to which the union leadership is firmly wedded to.

Any attempt to remerge the socialist and workers movements will require the active intervention of socialists into the workers movement. Luckily there is a very clear historical example of how Communists can effectively intervene into unions.

Solidarity with striking Woolworths workers!

RCO Central Commitee

The Revolutionary Communist Organisation stands in solidarity with all workers on indefinite strike at five Woolworths distribution centres in Victoria and New South Wales. The strike as of today has entered its thirteenth day of action, with more than 1,500 workers taking part in the industrial action. The strike follows six months of failed negotiations between the United Workers Union and Woolworths on firstly scrapping new productivity reforms, and secondly on boosting wage increases above the rate of inflation.

To boost both productivity and their bottom line, Woolworths has introduced a "productivity framework" that requires warehouse workers to achieve a 100 percent performance target when picking up objects at speed. This makes work in an already dangerous and disaster-prone work environment even more hazardous by placing more pressure on workers. Make no mistake; should any workers die due to this policy, it will be workplace murder and Woolworths will be responsible.

Furthermore, this guideline is an arbitrary and unrealistic standard that places a cloud of uncertainty over all workers in these warehouses. No one can guarantee that they will be able to reach these standards on a given day, and as such they leave workers in constant fear for their employment. It therefore serves the additional purpose as a psychological disciplinary measure on some of the most precarious workers in this country.

The second demand by the strikers and UWU is for an immediate pay increase of 25%, followed by wage increases of 15% in the following two years of the agreement. Woolworths distribution centre workers do not currently receive pay increases above the rate of inflation, meaning they effectively have their pay cut year-on-year. This is especially horrific in the context of the cost-of-living crisis, crushing workers between rising rents and prices, and shrinking wages. This crisis has seen the reemergence of child malnutrition in Australia, shown through the increasing occurrence of "19th century diseases" such as scurvy. The Foodbank Hunger Report published this year noted that 2 million households in Australia have experienced severe food insecurity in the last 12 months, with these families skipping meals and cutting down on fresh food. This is the face of a war on the working class, and strikes such as these are our opportunity to fight back.

Thirteen days of industrial action have already caused Woolworths to claim $50 million in losses. Bare supermarket shelves paint tabloid headlines as the capitalist press and the grocers fret over the determination of the strikers to hold out until victory. All this with only five distribution centres and less than 2,000 workers on strike provides but a brief glimpse of both the fragility of the capitalist logistical system, and just how much power the working class has when it mobilises into political action.

There are a total of 8,000 workers across the Woolworths logistics network. To ensure the demands are met, we call for comrades to bring as many of these workers as possible into the strike action. We call for further industrial organising and indefinite strike action on the grocery store floor and in every other department of Woolworths.

RCO cadres attended the picket line at the Dandenong South distribution centre early Monday morning to defend an attempt to bus in scab labour to break the strike. The strikebreakers were escorted by Victorian police, displaying the class traitor Labor state government's involvement in breaking the strike. The failure of this attempt to break the strike has galvanised the spirit of the workers present.

We commend the many communists, socialists, trade unionists, and radical workers who are standing in solidarity with the striking Woolworths workers. Many are present at the picket line, and the number of scabs being bussed in is decreasing by the day. As of this afternoon, The Building Industry Group of Unions (BIG), representing more than 80,000

workers in Victoria's building industry, has resolved to down tools and attend the picket "in large numbers" "at a moment's notice" if Woolworths attempts to break the picket line. Laws against solidarity strikes brought in by Labor need to be violated if they are to be overturned, and it is a positive sign to see a large union willing to disregard them.

Despite this momentum, we must not let down our guard. Where possible, comrades should still visit and protect the picket lines, bring food, and donate to the strike fund. We must also use this as an opportunity to further unite the workers' movement and the socialist movement; visiting comrades must bring radical literature and contribute to political discussion on the picket lines to raise the class consciousness of all striking workers. Industrial disputes are where the class struggle heightens; they are the schools of revolution, and we need to push for their success if we wish to see proletarian revolution in our lifetime.

Establishing a principled Left

CPGB - PCC

1. There is a real danger of escalation in Ukraine and the possibility of war between Russia and Nato.

2. We are told that in their September 13 White House meeting Joe Biden and Sir Keir Starmer agreed a "strong position", which everybody takes as reference to British Storm Shadows - and other Nato-supplied missiles that Volodymyr Zelensky wants to use to strike into the territory of the Russian Federation.

3. Putin has warned that, if this happens, it means that Nato would be "at war with Russia". After all, Ukraine could not use such missiles without Nato technical and military back-up - crucially US satellites. Dmitry Medvedev, former president and prime minister, ominously talks of reducing Kyiv to a "giant melted spot". Sabre-rattling, perhaps - till the moment when it is not.

4. Looking at the situation objectively, it is impossible to imagine Storm Shadows being a winner for Ukraine, as Zelensky and the whole pro-war liberal propaganda machine claims. Yes, they will make a marginal difference, but they will not - cannot - turn the tide of the war. Russia has already moved most important command posts, airforce bases and major storage facilities inside Russia, beyond their 155-mile range.

5. Their importance lies in how the dial is being turned up. For instance, the Polish foreign minister, Radosław Sikorski, has been hawking the possibility of Nato protecting Ukrainian nuclear facilities. But, of course, it is Ukrainian forces that have been recklessly shelling the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia power plant - not the other way round, as crazily suggested by large parts of the western media.

6. That alone is reason to be extraordinarily concerned. According to UN observers, with grossly "inadequate" staffing levels due to the war, this has "significantly increased the risk of a nuclear accident" in a country which already witnessed the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Zaporizhzhia is unlikely to explode - it is under cold shutdown - but shelling or a missile strike could still release significant amounts of deadly radiation. Depending on the prevailing winds, this could badly effect people in neighbouring Turkey, Belarus, Poland, Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria. Clearly nuclear power is inherently dangerous.

7. Owing to the sensitivity and significance of giving the go-ahead for Ukrainian use of Storm Shadows and other such missiles, there has been an elaborate kabuki dance. The US administration does not want to be seen to be taking the lead in upping the ante. So Biden called in his favourite yap dog, the UK, to come to Washington and lobby him. The same kabuki dance was then repeated in various European capitals. We saw exactly the same kind of performance with supplying main battle tanks and then F-16 fighter-bombers.

8. If others join the UK warmonger, as the US presumably wants, then not only will Kyiv be given permission to use Storm Shadows against Russia. France, Italy and, most importantly, the US will follow suit in giving permission for using the missiles they have supplied; ie, Scalps and Himars.

9. Lifting western restrictions on using missiles inside Russia would mark yet another

escalation - not a pivotal military moment. Storm Shadows are tactical, not strategic, weapons, but unlike drones they move fast and carry enough of an explosive payload to penetrate bunkers and knock out command posts.

10. Germany is already under intense pressure to supply Ukraine with its Taurus cruise missiles. We note that Germany has suffered enormously, with cheap Russian gas being cut off and public opinion swinging against underwriting the war in Ukraine. However, testifying to the failures of the left, this has largely been to the benefit of the far-right AfD.

11. The war in Ukraine has antecedents long predating February 24 2022. Directed by the CIA and spearheaded by the forces of extreme chauvinism and the organised far right, the Maidan coup deposed the 'neutral' Viktor Yanukovych government in Kyiv. Ukraine was shunted into the western camp with the stated ambition of joining the European Union.

12. The Russian response hardly came as a surprise. Crimea was annexed and Russian-Ukrainian separatist forces were encouraged and aided - in particular the armed rebellions in the Donbass. However, faced with a Nato membership plan, significantly increased Ukrainian Armed Forces attacks against the Donbass and the threat of heavy western sanctions, the Putin/FSB regime gave the go-ahead for a full-scale invasion. The aim was, at the very least, to force Kyiv into compliance and break it from the western camp. A trap.

13. Phase one of Putin's so-called 'special military operation' failed abysmally. Zelensky's government more than survived. With Nato military, propaganda, diplomatic and financial backing, it mobilised the Ukrainian population and mounted stiff resistance. Since then we have seen advances and retreats on both sides. Despite all that, the war is essentially a stalemate. Tens of thousands have died, many more have been horribly maimed and millions have been displaced in what is a reactionary war on both sides.

14. There is nothing remotely progressive about the Putin/FSB regime. It is fighting to preserve Russian independence, true. However, that goes hand-in-hand with a clampdown on democratic rights, the chauvinist aim of a greater Russia, promoting orthodox Christianity and annexing foreign territory and populations. Economically Russia is dominated by a combination of Kremlin insiders and pliant so-called oligarchs ('so-called' because they do not rule, do not govern). Suffice to say, then, Russia is not anti-imperialist. Russia wants to, dreams of, joining the top ranks of the imperialist club, not overthrowing imperialism.

15. Nor, on the other hand, is there anything remotely progressive about the Zelensky regime. It upholds a poisonously narrow version of Ukrainian nationalism - a nationalism that has no place for the Russian language and Russian-Ukrainians. Economically and politically it is dominated by oligarchs and has pursued a thorough-going neoliberal agenda.

16. No genuine socialist, no genuine communist can support either side. Both are reactionary, both are anti-working class. Those socialists and communists who support the Kremlin, or who see something anti-imperialist in its war with Ukraine, have completely lost their class bearings. The same can be said of the social-pacifist left and fostering the illusion that there can be a peaceful capitalism, as long as governments act reasonably and abide by internationally agreed rules and standards. In fact, war and capitalism are inseparable. Peace is only a moment between war, and war is merely the continuation of the same policy previously carried out peacefully through diplomacy, tariffs and sanctions.

17. Naturally, the social-imperialist 'left' claims that its support for Ukraine is no different from its support for Palestinian self-determination. There is a wilful refusal to recognise that both Ukraine and Israel are US proxies.

18. We must forthrightly oppose both social-imperialism and social-pacifism. Failure to do so, keeping quiet in the name of 'left unity', is treachery in its own right - it is centrism, and perhaps the worst kind of opportunism, because it provides seemingly 'left' excuses for blurring principles and finding an accommodation with social-imperialism and social-pacifism and thereby capitalism.

19. Throughout the entire current conflict, the US and its allies have sought to strike a balance between giving Ukraine enough weapons to resist Russia, on the one hand, and not doing anything too overtly provocative, on

the other. Naturally this has infuriated the Zelensky regime ... and its social-imperialist cheerleaders. They demand "full sanctions" against Russia (ie, siege warfare), claim that the Putin regime is "attacking democracy globally" and that Ukraine should get all the "arms necessary to liberate the country, from wherever possible and without conditions". Effectively this 'Arm, arm, arm Ukraine' line poses a 'guns or butter' choice in Europe, with the social-imperialists demanding guns: ie, supplying Ukraine with massively increased supplies of the most up-to-date fighter aircraft, tanks and missiles.

20. If, as it looks, the US has given the UK the go-ahead for the use of its Storm Shadows against targets within the Russian Federation, does this mean we stand on the threshold of nuclear war in Europe or a generalised nuclear exchange between Russia and the United States? Unlikely - well, at the moment - because such a war is unwinnable and would spell disaster for humanity as a whole ... but, of course, miscalculations can always happen.

21. Western support for Ukraine cannot be separated from other wars and conflicts, not least Israel's. The idea that the US, UK, France, etc are supporting a "just war" in Ukraine and an "unjust war" in Gaza and the wider Middle East, is a stupid, hopeless, opportunist muddle. States which are committed to anti-trade union laws, restrictions on civil rights and the continuation of class exploitation at home pursue those same class interests - including by other, violent, means - abroad. If a war is supported by our capitalist state, then it follows that such a war is a criminal war. Those who urge on any such war betray the working class and the cause of socialism.

22. The war between Russia and Ukraine is not a 'Goliath versus David' contest, which is how it is near universally portrayed by mainstream bourgeois politicians and the social-imperialists alike. It is a proxy war, being fought in the strategic interests of a declining US hegemon - which does not, of course, face any sort of serious challenge from Russia. China, though, is another matter entirely. From this perspective, the war in Ukraine, and Nato's steady eastward expansion, is fundamentally directed against China, not Russia.

23. As part of this anti-Beijing drive, it is vital to grasp that the aim of the US is to bring about regime change in Moscow. It wants to replace Putin with someone not unlike the first post-Soviet Russian president, Boris Yeltsin, or the now dead oppositionist, Alexei Navalny.

24. True, this runs the distinct danger, as US state department and military tops must surely know, of producing the very opposite of what they intend - a super-aggressive alternative in the Kremlin, willing to risk Götterdämmerung in the attempt to save Mother Russia from ruin and humiliation. Nonetheless, the US is banking on Putin being eased or shoved aside, either in a palace coup or by a colour revolution which results in ending Russia as a Black Sea naval power and degrading it into either a neocolony or a series of neocolonies. As a result - and this is crucial - that would see China surrounded - to the north by former Soviet republics, to the south by India and to the east by Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and the formidable American Pacific fleet - thereby potentially strangling China.

25. America would then control Halford Mackinder's 'world island' and therefore have the ability to reboot its domination of the entire globe. A scenario that both Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping will surely resist using whatever means that they have at their disposal.

26. Under such dire circumstances, which clearly carry the distinct risk of descending into a World War III, it is the duty of genuine socialists and communists to urgently cement principled unity and towards that end to ruthlessly expose social-imperialism, social-pacifism and centrist conciliationism. Clear lines of demarcation must be drawn. This is the necessary condition for developing the political consciousness of the advanced section of the working class and then taking the struggle of the broad masses from the narrow routine of trade unionism and economics to the level of high politics and thereby the perspective of turning what is a war between reactionary capitalist powers into a civil war - a revolution - for democracy, socialism and communism.

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CC Statement Endorsing “Establishing a principled Left" by the CPGB-PCC

RCO Central Committee

The statement “Establishing a principled Left” can be found in this edition of Partisan on pages 64-66. The CC minority statement can be found on pages 68-69.

The Central Committee of the RCO formally endorses the CPGB-PCC’s open statement on principled communist unity in the face of imperialist war in Ukraine. In line with our 2024-2024 communist perspectives document endorsed at our 2024 conference, the RCO’s position of revolutionary defeatism means no support to the ‘oligarchic’ Putinist clique in Russia nor to the imperialist NATO bloc that puppets Ukraine . The statement of the CPGB-PCC clearly and deliberately reflects this position, and as such our endorsement of it is an obvious theoretical and practical decision. It is undoubtedly true that, as the CPGB-PCC states, there is nothing remotely progressive in the cause of Russia or Ukraine, no side that represents the interests of the working class, and no way to lend support to either whilst maintaining communist class bearings and consciousness. In the face of uncertain times, communists must maintain a cautious certainty, and place their finger on the pulse of struggle and crisis. This statement represents a moment of this certainty, and a reading of the pulse, one that aligns in its core message and politics with the RCO’s own analysis and understanding of the importance of revolutionary defeatism in Ukraine.

However, it would be remiss of us to merely uncritically endorse a statement to which we have been invited to both discuss and endorse. Despite maintaining a core of comprehensive and important politics - revolutionary defeatism, neither social imperialism nor social pacificism, etc. - the statement itself is overly descriptive in its analysis of the (rapidly changing) situation in Ukraine. The RCO supports wholeheartedly a principled unity of communists in the struggle against war and capitalism, and the CPGBs statement maintains solid foundations for this unity. However, many of the resolutions are now outdated, or bogged down in overly specific details, for this statement to represent anything long-lasting. The substantive basis for unity is clear; anti-imperialism, anti-militarism, revolutionary defeatism, and support for democratic, communist struggle. Devoting approximately 10 resolutions to specific, time-sensitive details of the war itself on top of these points of unity is unnecessary, and impedes the clarity and potential for unity represented by this statement.

Nevertheless, the CC of the RCO understands that the foundations of this document are in line with the foundations of the RCO’s own political strategy outlined and endorsed by the conference. The need for communist unity on the question of Ukraine (and thus more broadly on the question of inter-imperialist struggle and revolutionary defeatism) is more pressing now than it was even when the CPGB first published its statement. As volatility increases, and conflict continues, communists must break with the sectarian muddling and sclerotic argumentation of the past few decades and struggle towards principled unity through open debate, critical discussion, and programmatic politics. Imperialism must be shoved into the grave at the same time as its father - capitalism - and the organised power of the working class - the communist party - must be the one to deliver the push.

No war but class war, no victory but communist victory!

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CC Minority Statement on the CPGB (PCC)'s Statement on War in Ukraine

Eliza MacDonald

I would like to explain why I voted no to the RCO endorsing the "Danger of World War III: the Communist Response. I applaud the statement for acknowledging the role of the USA and NATO in the War in Ukraine and I stand in solidarity with their call for Communists to work for the revolutionary defeat of the NATO war machine. I disagree with their unqualified call for revolutionary defeatism on both sides given the current context of the war and the world system. In the context of a fully formed inter-imperialist conflict this would be appropriate however this situation is different and requires a modified approach.

I agree on the first and second statement in full. In statement three it is encouraging to see that the statement does not explicitly condemn the Russian-backed resistance in the Donbass and Crimea prior to the Russian invasion. The antecedents of the invasion of Ukraine lie in the anti-democratic and anti-communist defeat of the working class with the Maidan coup brought about by the pro-EU oligarchs, the fascists, and the CIA. The victory of the coup was associated with unrest including that of workers which was met with fascist violence, most notably in the massacre of communists and trade unionists in the Odessa trade union hall in 2014. A further democratic defeat for the workers was legal decommunization banning nominally or otherwise communist and socialist parties initially from running for office, and then the imposing of full conditions of illegality including the jailing of comrades. The people of Crimea chose to cede (no matter the flaws in the referendum it is widely acknowledged this move had majority support) and join the Russian Federation. In the Donbass civil resistance became a civil war which rapidly became a proxy war with NATO supporting the new Ukrainian regime and the Russians supporting the Donbass rebels.

Point five begins with the statement that "The US administration is pursuing regime change in Moscow and the break-up of the Russian Federation" which is correct and a meaningful possibility. The military defeat of Russia and Ukraine joining NATO is an existential threat to the people of Russia and given that the conflict has at least in part a defensive character. All communists should support the workers taking power when their party has majority support however this does not equate to a call for the collapse of the Russian Federation in the current context. Such a collapse would most likely lead to both Western neocolonial interests carving up the country in a series of ethnostates. The destruction of the developmentalist bourgeoisie state in Russia and its replacement with a Yeltsin-style Western backed state, or series of ethnostates, would likely lead to a campaign of deindustrialisation which would also be counter to the interests of the global working class. Such a possibility is a major step backwards for the working class globally. The further encirclement of Russia by NATO poses not only a lethal threat to Putin but also the working class within Russia and resistance to this cannot be equated with NATO creeping ever Eastward.

There may well be validity in the fact that Russia is currently a sub-imperial power with some aspects of imperial relationships being present between itself and less powerful nations. The economy is not dominated by the extraction of surplus value from neo-colonies and hence the country cannot be considered a fully fledged imperialist power. While the war in part is a desperate attempt to wrangle Russian oligarchs back into power in Ukraine that does not negate its primary defensive form.

The Statement also misunderstood why many communists see the progressive potential in a multipolar world. It is not that a multipolar world is more peaceful but that communist parties have only taken power under conditions of multipolarity or bipolarity whether that be in the period of intense inter-imperial competition from the First World War, to the end of the Second or in the Cold War. The political and military fragmentation

of capital provides the workers with opportunities to build and seize power. Inter-power conflict will also provide fledgling democratic republics an opportunity to evade immediate economic isolation and strangulation before the revolution can be spread. The multipolar world is the rope from which the international workers will hang the bourgeoisie.

The war Putin's government is currently fighting clearly has a mixed character. While being primarily a war of national defence it also has a secondary reactionary character of being a nationalist war aiming to improve the sub imperial advantage over Ukrainian workers previously enjoyed by the Russian Capitalists. This war is neither fully an imperialist war or a war of national liberation, it's a hybrid war that requires its own approach. Russia's strategic bombing, targeting of infrastructure and annexation of territories is reactionary. The working class and their communist party are the only force that can finally vanquish imperialism. Recognising this fact does not mean communists should call for the total defeat of the Russian Federation in the current circumstances which would forestall the possibility of a new workers democratic republic.

For the total defeat of the USA and NATO in the war in Ukraine!

Support defensive actions against the USA and NATO in Eastern Europe!

Oppose imperial and sub-imperial interests!

Turn the national defensive war into a global people's war.

Against Global Popular Fronts

Edith Fischer

Eliza MacDonald has submitted her letter detailing why she voted against adopting the CPGB letter calling for a principled socialist response to the war in Ukraine. I am in favour of adopting the resolution, and I support the Central Committee endorsing this letter. While MacDonald is well within her rights to dissent from the Central Committee's position, the position she would have the organisation adopt would throw us into a confused marsh and undermine the democratic mandate of the RCO Conference.

Let us be clear on the terms of the debate. Regardless of what one thinks of the letter circulated in Weekly Worker, the RCO Conference already established the organisation's line on the Ukraine conflict. Allow me to quote at some length from the Perspectives 2024-25 paper adopted by Conference:

20. The re-emergence of inter-imperialist competition in the imperialist world order is nowhere better expressed than in Eastern Europe. Here, the semi-imperialist power of Russia is locked in a feverish struggle with the US-NATO bloc. The aim of Russian capital is to assert its rights to a distinctive sphere of influence in the territory of the former USSR. The aim of the American-led imperialist bloc is to exhaust the Russian state, with the eventual aim of effecting a regime change in Russia. Having done that the aim is to 'encircle' China – and through war, regional rebellion, a colour revolution, etc, bring about regime change in Beijing. Ideologically, cover for rebooting US global hegemony is being provided by hypocritical claims about championing democracy and standing up for the rights of small nations.

21. Disgracefully, sections of the left have sided with the Ukrainian state, in reality their own governments, with some even calling for increases in NATO arms shipments. Naturally, social imperialism excuses itself with all sorts of pseudo-socialist and democratic phrases.

22. Our opposition to the interests of the US-NATO bloc should not be understood as support for the Russian Federation, a semi-peripheral capitalist state led by an oligarchic-personalist clique, that sits atop the corpse of the former Soviet Republic. In the war between Russian semi-imperialism and the imperialist ambitions of the Western Powers, we adopt a position of revolutionary defeatism.

23. We reject the calls by some in the socialist movement to join in an international popular front in support of "multipolarity". In the contest between the great bandit and the

lesser bandit, we do not prefer the lesser bandit. Any re-organisation of the world system on bourgeois terms would simply be a redivision of the diminishing surplus value extracted from the world working class. International proletarian revolution is the only force that can tear down world imperialism.

Here the organisation's line could not be clearer: Russia is a semi-imperialist state, the war between NATO and Russia is inter-imperialist in character, and we repudiate any attempt at forming a "Global Popular Front" in the name of Multipolarity. Of course, comrades are free to agitate for whatever view they may like. However, any attempt to overturn this clear mandate at the Central Committee should be vigorously opposed. The situation has not fundamentally shifted in such a way as to make a change in line necessarily.

Let us briefly turn our gaze towards the argument offered by Comrade MacDonald in her minority dissension. Eliza argues that support for Russia's "defensive" war is necessary to avoid the Balkanisation of the Russian Federation. Certainly, we do not support the imperialist program of grinding Russia under its boots. However, the question at play is whether the working class should subordinate itself to the interests and class program of the Russian capitalists.

Is Russia Imperialist?

Comrade MacDonald argues that while the Russian state does undertake some "imperialist policy" in relation to their immediate neighbours, the Russian social formation as a whole is not characterised by imperialism. This is a misunderstanding of the nature of imperialism. Imperialism is a stage in the development of the capitalist world economy - it becomes a logical and historical necessity once capitalism reaches a certain stage of development. It is the imperative of all capitalist states to pursue a policy of imperialism. However, this does not mean all imperialists are equal. The capitalist classes of Peru or Iraq are not sufficiently developed to pursue an imperialist policy of their own. Most likely, they never will be. However, middling capitalist powers, such as Russia and the United Arab Emirates, are capable of playing the role of lesser imperialist within the global semi-periphery.

Russia, in function, is a junior partner in world imperialism. Russian capitalists benefit from the exploitation of minerals in the Sahel. Russian foreign investment overwhelmingly falls in the Commonwealth of Independent States, the United Arab Emirates, and in China. In all these countries, Russian capitalists benefit from lower wages and tight control over trade union organising. In practice, Russia serves as a reactionary policeman in Eurasia. Nowhere is this clearer than in Kazakhstan. When the Tokayev government - a government of exploiters which represents the power of local capitalists - was faced with working class rebellion, it was the intervention of Russian troops that secured the rule of the gangsters. The Russian military serves as the local enforcer of the power of the capitalists.

Multipolarity

When the war in Ukraine began, the RCO (at the time a single cell operating in Brisbane) issued a statement arguing that the only beneficiaries of this war would be the imperialists. This remains true, and has become clearer as time has gone on. The Russian military offensive into Ukraine has been a disaster for Russian and Ukrainian workers. It has exacerbated a bleeding sore in Eastern Europe, it has displaced millions of workers, it has strengthened NATO, and the crippling of European industry has actually strengthened US imperialism. The opening of a front in Europe has allowed the Azeri government to carry out mass deportations of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. In Russia, the main beneficiaries have been the war industries and the capitalists who benefit from selling gas and oil to Europe via China and India. As such, it is unclear how the Russian involvement in Ukraine is advancing a "multipolar world".

It is certainly true that the emergence of an industrially powerful and financially independent Chinese state threatens the hegemony of the American imperialists - just as the emergence of an industrially powerful and financially independent German imperialism threatened the hegemony of the British Empire at the dawn of the last century. This does not mean that communists should necessarily support the lesser bandit against the greater. Inter-imperialist conflict does open possibilities for working class struggle.

However, it also presents challenges: resurgent nationalism and the subordination of the revolutionary movement to the interests of competing imperialist powers being two of the most obvious.

Many communists have made the error that MacDonald would have us make today. Not least of these was W.E.B. Dubois, who in opposing the imperial and white supremacist interests of his own capitalist class, argued for the progressive character of Japanese imperialism in Asia. It is true that Japanese imperialism strengthened nationalist movements that would later go on to take power, such as in Indonesia. However, communists would rightly feel appalled at supporting the imperialist ambitions of Tokyo. Japanese imperialism, while certainly challenging the rule of white colonists in the East, did not emancipate Asia from colonial rule - it only re-ordered the existing capitalist-imperialist system into an economic sphere under their influence.

Just as communists do not support small capitalists against big capitalists, so too do we not support the smaller capitalist powers against the greater ones. Instead, we must uphold a universal policy of the independent power of the working class. Proletarian independence is not possible if the Russian working class is unable to oppose its own capitalists' military adventures.

CC Statement on the victory of Trump

RCO Central Committee

Donald Trump has won the US presidential election, securing both an electoral and popular majority, and control of the senate and the house, to add to the Republican party's control of the high priests of the constitution, the supreme court. Trump's victory was spawned from the total failure of the Democratic party to turn out over 10 million workers who voted for them in the 2020 election, or inspire any more to support their sclerotic politics of Bipartisanship and Bidenism. The Democrats, the Party of Bourgeois Order – the representatives of the American Finance Capitalists - spent its administration crushing the working class at home with strike breaking, inflation, mass deportations and police repression, and the international working class abroad with inter-imperialist war in Ukraine, genocide in Palestine, and the continued superexploitation of the global periphery.

The Democrats initially sought to run their corpse candidate and President Joe Biden, whose failing mental faculties epitomise the semi-terminal decline of US empire and the bloated, necrotic politics of international capital. A switch to Kamala Harris by the Party of order sought to swindle the American working class with the appearance of change in a so-called 'politics of joy' cloaking the continuation of the Biden regime, and all its pro-capital, anti-worker facets. Their tough on crime, anti-immigrant, billionaire backed and Cheney influenced campaign sought to embrace reaction - while raining lofty attacks at their Bonapartist enemy; Trump. It is no surprise that they suffered a defeat in the election.

Trump's Bourgeois party of reaction, that of the petit bourgeois, the national bourgeoisie in the extractive industries, and increasingly the big tech 'entrepreneurial' capitalists, was able to hold onto and to a small extent expand their support in the working class, exploiting the unpopularity of the Party of Order. With chunks of Trump's own 2016 agenda adopted by the Democrats; building the wall and deportations, expanding the US's confrontation with China and support of its client states such as Israel and strengthening the US repressive apparatus, Trump pushed further on each and every point - winning out the struggle to represent the interests of an increasingly concretised coalition party of reaction.

While Trumpism itself is certainly not fascist, as many on the 'left' claim, the coalition of reaction contains within it the core of a counter-revolution that could, under differing subjective and objective conditions, form the basis for a US fascist movement. Namely, Trumpism embodies the attempt to roll back the material gains won by women in the long revolution, driven by the desire to restore US social reproduction through the

intensification of patriarchal oppression. With the sexual revolution that began in the 1960s, enhanced by the global reorganisation of the working class which has seen women enter en masse into immensely profitable service industries abandoning the rural and agricultural patriarchal family form, women made significant material gains throughout the 20th century. Trumpism has successfully capitalised upon the reaction to this combined force of reorganisation and revolution through a virulent enforcement of patriarchal ideology and social reproduction founded upon the family model - embodied in restrictions on abortion, contraceptive access, and thus blatant attacks upon economic and social rights won by women.

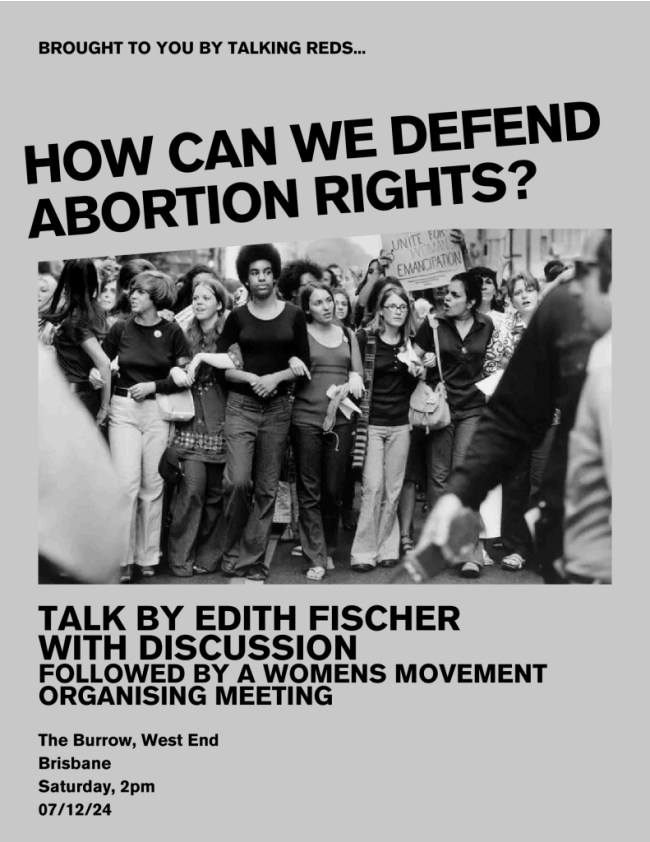
This policy, central to Trump's campaign, won large sections of men to his flag, who seek the mediation of their oppression in the workplace through the subordination of women in the home. The small business owners who flocked to Trump, and the far-right paramilitaries within the MAGA movement further elucidate a potential core for a serious fascist movement. However, without an organised proletarian threat, a merged, strengthened, socialist workers movement, a communist party, there is no threat to the American bourgeoisie strong enough for them to hand them the reigns of the state and political power to. Thus, the material basis for fascism is virtually null. There is no need for a mass movement of reaction in the streets - one that seizes state power from the bourgeoisie and preserves its economic power - when there is no threat to this state or economic power. Instead, the party of reaction, the Republicans, will implement their measures with all the countenances of bourgeois civility, within the legitimated state apparatus of the bourgeoisie.

In so-called Australia, the petit bourgeois radical party, the Greens, have taken Trump's election as an opportunity to raise the call for the withdrawal from AUKUS with an appeal to the so-called unique threat posed by Trump. We reject the notion that US imperialism should be somehow more staunchly opposed when it wears a reactionary mask as opposed to its progressive one. We do not value the preservation of the Australian bourgeois state. Our aim is not to secure it from a "dangerous" or "unstable" US headed by Trumpist reactionaries. Instead, the Australian working class must head the break with US imperialism outright - regardless of its shade or form. In Australia, it is as correct to oppose US and Australian imperialism and the rule of capital under the democrats as it will be and was under the republicans.

For the international working class, while much is up in the air on the specific policies of the incoming Trump administration, it is clear that the fight against imperialism will go on. It is clear also that this aforementioned seed of fascism in the form of the counter-revolution against feminist gains must be combatted wherever it arises. It is only a matter of time until many of the sentiments expressed in a clarified form in the Republican party of the US cohere politically in other countries (as they already have in South Korea) and mount their own attacks against feminism, the working class, and the liberal capitalist order. Communists and the working class everywhere must be prepared - however we can, to the best that we can be. In the US, the socialist movement should use the defeat of the Party of Order to rally its disaffected proletarian supporters to its banner - and be wary of its attempts to pivot from its right appeal in governing to its turning left and co-optation of social movements in opposition.

In Solidarity,

The Revolutionary Communist Organisation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CC Open Letter: Toitū te Tiriti! Defend the Treaty of Waitangi!

RCO Central Committee

The November Hīkoi (march) in Aotearoa (New Zealand) poses questions on the national question, racial oppression, the far-right, and class independence for Communists across Oceania. The RCO stands for the national liberation of Māori and opposes racist scapegoating. Communists should also stand for class independence and critique legalistic strategies centred on the Treaty of Waitangi.

At stake is the interpretation of the Treaty of Waitangi, a document signed in 1840 between the United Tribes of New Zealand (a confederation including several Māori Chiefs on the North Island) and the British Crown. The Māori intended that the Treaty would protect their land, property, and partial sovereignty whilst coming under British control in an act of submission. The document was signed on behalf of all Māori, but the Chiefs in the South Island were opposed. The English and Māori copies of the Treaty vary in meaning substantially, which facilitated British domination of the islands and people.

Settler colonialism ramped up throughout the 1800s, resulting in armed struggle by Māori freedom fighters. A policy of violent suppression and disposition from the land led to the halving of the Māori population and they were relegated to the position of a racialised minority. The British Crown seized land from the Māori and sold it to capitalists and farmers at extremely low prices. This dispossession, combined with violent warfare, led to many Māori leaving the countryside and traveling to the city. As they had no capital of their own, they joined the working class while still facing racial and national oppression. Hence, settler-colonialism provided cheap land and cheap labour, which provided a basis for the formation of capitalist rule in Aotearoa.

The 20th century saw a growth in violent assimilationism to eradicate Māori cultural life, a particularly pointed facet of this being the banning of the Māori language being spoken in schools. This intensifying subjugation was to ensure a continued supply of cheap labour power. Oppression was eventually met by resistance in the streets. In 1975, this led to the Labor Government creating the Waitangi Tribunal tasked with righting the wrongs caused by the unequal application of the original Treaty. Limited restitution has since been obtained, including some land redistribution and the teaching of the Māori language in schools. Māori continue to suffer inequity, but the reforms cannot be ignored. Communists must recognise that the Treaty of Waitangi was a formalisation of the domination of the Māori by the British crown, however, some struggle around the Treaty can be progressive.

In 2023, the previous Labor Government was replaced by a right-wing coalition led by the National Party, who were joined in coalition by New Zealand First and the far-right ACT Party. In November 2024, ACT introduced the Treaty Principles Bill, which promised to give New Zealand's Parliament and Crown the sole right to interpret and administer the Treaty of Waitangi. The aim of this legislation was to strip Māori of the cultural and material gains obtained since the founding of the Tribunal in 1975. The bill could also pave the way for further exploitation of land and seabed by Capital. Whilst the bill passed its first reading, the National Party has pledged to vote against it at the second reading, meaning the bill is unlikely to pass at this stage. Communists must see this bill as an attempt to intensify national oppression against the Māori. Workers in Aotearoa cannot hold power whilst a minority is nationally and racially dominated. Communists must call for the liberation of Māori, as only equality between workers of all nationalities can provide the conditions for concrete working-class unity. As such, Communists must participate in movements such as the recent Hīkoi.

The ACT Party began its history as a right libertarian formation but has increasingly gravitated towards a right populism and nationalism. The Party receives significant funding from some of the wealthiest individuals in the country and is linked with the extreme right in the United States. In campaigning for its Treaty Principles Bill, ACT argues that Māori are currently receiving extra privileges compared to the white majority. ACT propaganda emphasises "equality under the law", implying that the white majority are second-class citizens. The fact that Māori face much higher levels of poverty and social exclusion should disprove the argument of

special privileges, if anything, this is much needed affirmative action. Secondly, equality under the law is only possible in a democratic republic led by a party of the workers, not a bourgeoisie oligarchic constitutional monarchy. The ACT Party is spreading racial animus against Māori which divides the working class. Communists should unmask the ACT Party's race baiting while prosecuting a campaign of militant anti-racism to ensure working class unity and solidarity.

Communists must unceasingly battle against national and racial prejudice. Bigotry can lead to the white portion of the working class identifying their interests with representatives of the capitalist class, rather than standing in solidarity with Māori, Pasifika, and Asian workers as part of the global proletariat. This identification with the ruling class by the white portion of the working-class results in a loyalty to the capitalist state which is the basis of Laborism. The working class needs to be won away from Laborism by communists if the workers are to take power for themselves.

ACT represents only a fraction of the capitalist class with the majority being supportive of the status quo around the Treaty of Waitangi. In the eyes of most capitalists, Māori are a minority that can be included within the bourgeois political fabric. The Treaty is at the core of the capitalist state project and hence its preservation is in line with political stability which favours the bourgeoisie. Such a stability is predicated on a large proportion of Māori facing poverty. Communists want to go far beyond a fairer interpretation of the Treaty. Communists seek equality for all sectors of the working class, to build the unity needed to overturn the capitalist state in favour of a democratic republic. Such a republic would hold land in common and would enforce equality between the Māori and English languages. While the status quo around the Treaty must be defended from the far-right, a party of the working class must build working class power that can supersede the Treaty with a new binational state as part of a Socialist Federation of Oceania.

The November Hīkoi to protest the Treaty Principles Bill was one of the largest in the history of Aotearoa with tens of thousands of people marching to Wellington. The movement was broadly supported by Māori and non-indigenous people. Te Pāti Māori (a Māori nationalist party) played a major role in this movement. This is unsurprising as during the 2023 elections, Te Pāti Māori won the majority of seats reserved for Māori, although a lesser, though still substantial portion of the Māori vote went to the Labor and Green parties. Te Pāti Māori is a cross-class alliance, and its bourgeois and petit-bourgeois constituents will never countenance the militant class struggle necessary to overturn the colonial state and Capital's power. Only class independence can defeat the rule of the bosses in Aotearoa and overcome the national oppression and racism against Māori. The working class must have its own party with a strategy to take power, and sectors of the capitalist class cannot be relied upon as allies. Communists must fight to popularise class independence amongst working class Māori, and all workers in Aotearoa.

In Solidarity,

The Revolutionary Communist Organisation

Submissions

Partisan accepts and encourages unsolicited submissions from left-wing radicals and militants of all backgrounds. Articles can range from 800-1,000 words, and essays are limited to 2,000 words. Word count is less restrictive for other submissions including letters and reports, but we would encourage you to keep them concise.

Please proof-read etc prior to submitting. Our staff will also sub-edit as necessary. We publish monthly, so aim to submit before the 25th of the month at the absolute latest (15th-20th is ideal). Simultaneous submissions accepted on a case-by-case basis.

We are primarily interested in topics such as Marxist political economy, political strategy and tactics, engagement with Communists pasts and futures, critiques of Liberalism and Capitalism, interviews, and features. When making a submission, please include your name (or pseudonym), a summary of the piece, and any other relevant information (such as photos and sourcing). All submissions are to be emailed to the publishing email, **partisanmagazine@proton.me**

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The Past is everpresent

ABBA BRUNOVNA ERTCSEOVÁ, OLOMOUC, CZECHIA

To be of the Communist Czech Left, born after 1989, is to live with a seemingly permanent sour taste in your mouth.

From the cradle, you are told that what was here 35 years ago was a system they called 'Communism'. You are told that it failed. And that life has become better since then. Then, as you grow, listen, read and speak, you will learn to call it 'Socialism'. You will learn and -know- that life hasn't become better. Perhaps even take the position that it has become -worse-. Red banners and bold transparents you will raise, demanding, screaming, begging, crying for the Past, Present and Future the generations of the past denied you. Stole away from you. Life will become worse.

And you will look again into the past for a better world.

Inevitably, four numbers will pound themselves into your skull. 1968. Again and again, you will return to the question of that year. Perhaps, you will give in. Accept that Communism failed. Become a Social Democrat, a Neoliberal, a Fascist or Populist. Life will become -easier-. But it will not get -better-. On the other hand, you might reaffirm everything you believe. See a point in time and proclaim with all the air in your lungs: "This is where we could have fixed it!". You will keep waving the Red banners. Life will become worse. Again and again, you will return to the vision of 1968. Dreaming of Dubček, Svoboda, Husák, Gottwald and all the other names your older Comrades taught you. Luxemburgová and Liebknecht. Marx and Lenin. The Communes of 1871 and 1794. And perhaps, somewhere in this cycle, you will ask yourself a question.

"Does it matter?"

Czechoslovak Socialism failed. Of course it did. Do you not stand amidst the ruins? Time will never reverse. Jaurès will not be revived. The SPDeutschlands will not unfuck itself, nor will the KSČM for that matter. The Past is everpresent. It will never leave your memory. Yet the Future of Communism is unbuilt. Our turn is Past. It is Capital's turn now. And after Capital is Past, Our Turn will come again! The sourness will leave your mouth. Life -will- become better.

Because we will make it so.

People’s Blockade is no Blockade at all - so why should we go anyway?

MAX J, NEWCASTLE

Rising Tide is an up and coming 'civil disobedience' activist group which hosts the "People's Blockade", an activist festival which involves rafts and kayaks in the hunter river to prevent the entry of coal ships. This year, I counted many coal ships which 'broke the blockade', so it seemed that the blockade was no blockade at all. So why did RCO comrades along with FSP members host a stall at the festival anyway?

The not-quite-a-blockade brings together a variety of people from various backgrounds, from politically engaged students (both high school and university), to elderly activists, indigenous activists, random members of the public, etc. During our stall, we were able to leaflet and have conversations with all sorts of politically engaged people who more or less were at least sympathetic to a communist perspective, even if they didn't have all the details worked out in their heads. A great gathering of that many people who are politically engaged in one way or another (even if it isn't the right way) is the sort of event communists should be going to, to have a presence and spread communist politics. To refuse to go to events such as these is to leave these people to the mercy of Greens, adventurists, opportunists, reactionaries (of the 'overpopulation theorist' flavor - Extinction Rebellion and Scientist Rebellion), etc. It would be to refuse to carry out one of the basic duties of communists: to intervene in all avenues of the struggle where working people are present and engaged.

While we can turn our noses at groups like Extinction Rebellion and Rising Tide, we can't deny that adventurist left-liberalism is attracting people to it. When people feel as if they can't intervene politically through the usual left-reformist means, they will turn to adventurism and in extreme cases, insurrectionism/terrorism (see: Blockade Australia et al). The Greens were also in attendance to fish for voters, as they are prone to do. I myself saw Mehreen Fahruqi at the Greens stall (which, on the second day, was across from ours). We need to be there to present an alternative to left-reformism and left-

opportunism/adventurism: a communist program for the working class to take power.

RCO and FSP comrades did an amazing job spreading communist and eco-socialist politics during this blockade. We also did a good job showing people that unity between communists is more than possible, something you wouldn't hear of if you only went to the CPA's otherwise middling stall. Our leaflets were incredibly popular during the blockade, especially our 'eco-communism' booklet, which summarised the RCO's position on communist demands for the climate crisis. Leaflets on the cost of living crisis, what communism was, and why capitalism is the problem were also popular.

Newcastle's Revolutionary Communists made their presence known this weekend, and we will most likely attend the next not-quite-a-blockade, with more leaflets and hopefully more comrades. We hope that our partnership with comrades from the FSP is long-lasting and ends with a merger toward a mass workers party.

Once More, Concerning the Greens

EDITH FISCHER, BRISBANE

Adam Bandt is at it again. Posting on twitter, he once again attacks the "ColesWorths" duopoly and calls for the Australian government to utilise anti-monopoly powers to break up the supermarket giants. This plank is a key part of the Greens platform, advertised to "reduce the cost of living" by introducing competition amongst the big capitalists. Alongside a utopian social housing program and demands to lower the interest rate, Greens candidates and activists repeat the slogan of trust-busting again, and again, and again. Some of us are starting to feel unwell.

It is worth repeating why the socialist movement opposes breaking up the supermarket duopoly. Firstly, the monopsony power of the supermarkets is exactly the source of relatively cheap food in Australia. If Coles and Woolworths did not keep their boot on the neck of the various farmers, agricultural capitalists, and food manufacturers, prices would surely rise. This monopsony power decreases to the degree that more capitalists enter the market. Breaking up the supermarkets would have, in the long term, the opposite of the desired effect.

Secondly, there is the question of trade union organising. The Retail and Fast-Food Workers Union, in an attempt to counter-signal the mainstream of the labour movement, have endorsed plans to break up the supermarkets. This is wrong-headed in the extreme. It is simply easier to organise workers against big capitalists than small ones. The larger the firms, the more concentrated the workforce, the greater the capacity to challenge the power of the bosses on the floor and in the street. Monopolisation is good for the working class, it is good for the labour movement, and it should be embraced, not rejected.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, trust-busting is simply reactionary. Monopolisation is a dynamic innate within the development of capitalist production. Fantasies of a return to a more "local, competitive capitalism" are promulgated by the middle classes in order to advance their class interests, but ultimately they are standing before the unstoppable forces of social development. From the perspective of socialists, who seek the socialisation of the means of production and the establishment of a cooperative commonwealth, there is simply no question: monopolisation is favourable to the development of the social forces that ready the ground for the coming of communism. It will be infinitely easier to nationalise two large grocery chains than a dozen smaller ones.

So, the proposal to trust-bust ColesWorths is a reactionary fantasy. Does that mean that we should let grocery capital trundle over the working class unchecked? Of course not! We favour unionisation of grocery workers, price controls on key goods, the establishment of consumer cooperatives, and the establishment of a state monopoly over groceries. However, these are the slogans of a socialist movement. We cannot expect it from a party of middle-class progressives.

Politically, the Australian Greens do not have a future. They are paralysed between two political paths, both of which will end in disaster. Either they can tack to the left, embrace their downwardly mobile petit-bourgeois base, and be outflanked by a regrouped socialist movement, or they can maintain their support amongst the environmentally and socially conscious middle class - and remain a minor party of the bourgeoisie. Either way, a dream of a "Green government" is exactly that: a dream. It is time for a refounded communist party to wake us up.

The stupidity of the cult of "disenfranchised young men"

MICHAEL RUHL, BRISBANE

Least surprising of the many demographic trends observed in the voting of this year's US election was the continued rightward shift of young men.

This has been promoted by liberals, of all varieties, as a consequence of young men being victimised for simply being male. The perpetrators of this persecution? The feminist movement, social media, the education system, and the various other bogeyman of the family. There is, according to the petty-bourgeois sections of Capital, a "war on masculinity" being waged by these sections of society infiltrated by the "Left". Of course, this is just the patriarchal order re-asserting itself against the advances of the last century's women's movements.

The current movement of young men and teenage boys to become ever more vile and threatening misogynists is part of this shift to remove women's agency, and to re-strengthen the patriarchy. This has only accelerated after Trump, the American small business owner's guy in Washington, won last month's US election. One only needs to hear the teenage misogynist's newfound mantra of "her body, my choice" that became popular days after Trump's victory to recognise this. Young men openly deny women's agency to their own bodies, online and in person, and the only concern of the small capitalist is to bemoan the (rightful) demonisation of masculinity. He would have you side with the foot soldiers of his patriarchal onslaught.

This is not the first time a counter-revolution against women was waged by the petty capitalists as they struggled to reverse gains made by the proletariat. Towards the end of the 15th century and the beginning of the 17th, as feudalism ended and capitalism emerged, the working class of Europe was immiserated as the traditional land-use allotments and entitlements of peasants were smashed. Vast impoverishment of the European working class followed. A state-led campaign against the relative autonomy of women was also waged in this period. In this period, female socialisation was treated with contempt, women were demonised as perfidious schemers who undermine the valiant man. Abortion, earlier considered a relatively minor offence, was by now a crime that carried the death sentence. Sexual violence was rife as the view of women was degraded to that of being a baby-making factory. To enforce the new bourgeois view of women, and to rob women of their autonomy, was a wave of state-backed violence now referred to as the Witch Hunts. For more than two centuries, hundreds of thousands women were murdered, tortured, and buried alive. Although it is not widely considered a genocide, when considered in this lens, as outlined by Silvia Federici in Caliban & The Witch, it is clear it should be. Great violence was used to reduce the status of women to their role under capitalism, and this was partly reversed (at least in the imperial core) by the women's movements of the last century. The current wave of misogynist violence and woman-hatred is by no means separate from the small capitalist's re-ignited war on women. Whether on a given day they are decrying abortion, the local homeless women's shelter, or "the demonisation of masculinity", it is all part of the same project to strengthen patriarchy's rule over the lesser woman.

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Writing us a letter is easy, and is a good alternative to writing a full article or essay. Letters are submitted like normal articles are, through our email.

A letter could be any kind of statement or observation, in around 500 words or less. The shorter the better. In a letter, you should give your opinion or statement on something, then finish off with your name and city (any name works - many of our writers use pseudonyms).

In particular, we encourage letters written as a reply to other articles. Of course, you are also free to write a full article in reply to another article, but sometimes it may be better to simply write a letter in. Letters may also be replies to other letters, and of course, an article can also be a reply to a letter.

You could also write one directed to the editorial team at Partisan, and if you do, we will submit a reply in the following issue. We aim to build a lively letters section as part of our overall goal to establish Partisan as a platform of open debate and polemic between and amongst the organised Left.

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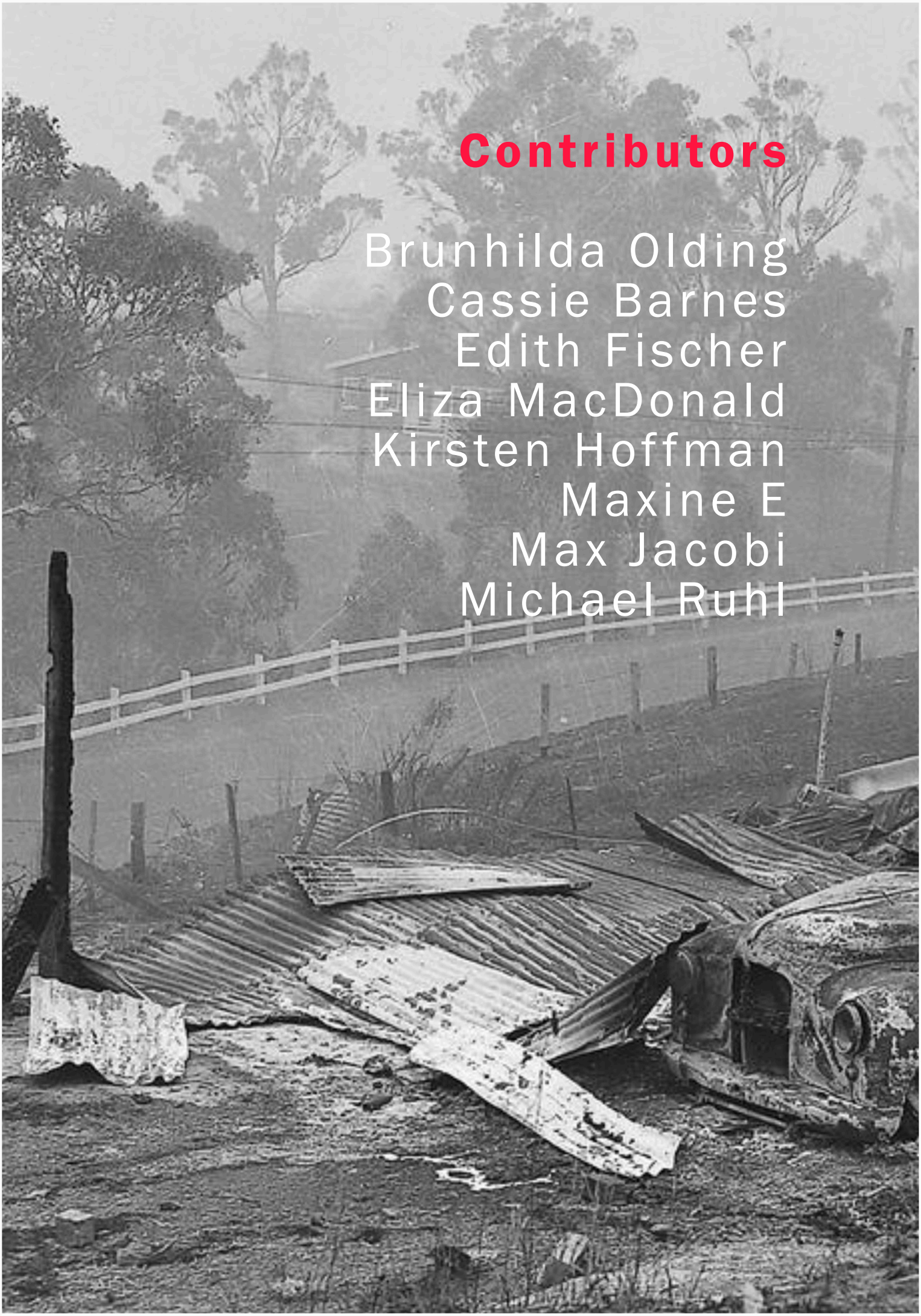

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